

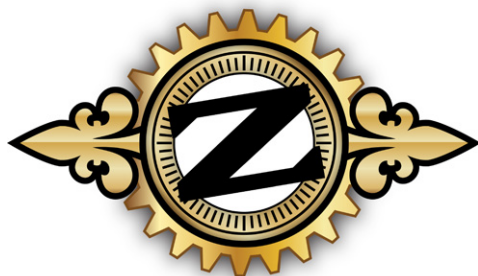


**ENsider Presents:**

# **The Last Starry Sky**

## **Part Two**

**A 5E-Compatible Adventure for 15th- to 16th-Level Characters**



# Act Two: Long Live the King

**I**N THIS ACT, LOTS OF PEOPLE TRY TO KILL THE KING.  
A lot.

## King's Court

### Social. Real-Time.

*The party reaches Slate and interrupts a wedding to warn the king.*

Dame Jillian the Green Knight commands the guards at Torfeld Palace in Flint, and when the party arrives (likely riding in after sunset with a raucous band of fey knights), she refuses to let them enter until they prove they're who they say they are. She orders the guards to attack if the party refuses.

Dame Jillian concentrates to detect magic on the PCs and asks them obscure questions about the RHC headquarters in Flint. Once she's satisfied as to their identity, she escorts them to the throne room, where the king is officiating a wedding between two beloved members of the palace house staff. Before they reach the throne room, however, she mentions matter-of-factly that the royal skyseer killed himself this morning after claiming that he could see no future after tonight.

### Gamemastering Note.

After the previous fairly combat-light act, this one is a bit of a gauntlet. It might be best to think of this act as a dungeon that happens to include innocent bystanders. The party faces a series of combat threats in quick succession, and they must decide which enemies to deal with in which order. They probably won't have time to take even a short rest, and they might have to content themselves with "surviving" rather than winning.

It can be assumed many innocents will die, and the exact number won't change how the rest of the adventure plays out. But the party might choose to defend the defenseless, in which case they are rewarded with a cache of powerful magic in the vault under Area 18.

If you want to track civilian casualties, start by placing roughly 400 bystanders in the palace. There are 51 in the throne room for the wedding, and at least 9 people in each other numbered area. Use a coin or other token to indicate three bystanders sharing a 5-ft. square—you'll need at least 130 tokens if you want to mark all the bystanders at once. Once fighting breaks out (this happens when Romana's coup attempt fails), each of the five "threats" (ghost council, undead horde, skeletal dragon, wights and flayed jaguar, and assassins) will kill 3 bystanders in any round when they're not busy fighting a PC.



#### FROM THE PEN OF

Ryan Nock

#### INITIAL TREATMENT BY

Matthew J. Hanson

#### EVOCATIVE COVER ILLUSTRATION BY

ShenFei

#### STUNNING CARTOGRAPHIC DISPLAYS BY

James Hazelett  
Jonathan Roberts

#### MASTERFUL INTERIOR ILLUSTRATIONS BY

Dennis Darmody  
Renan Moraes  
Claudio Pozas  
Eleni Tsami  
Includes art in the public domain

#### WITH UNPARALLELED LAYOUT AND GRAPHIC DESIGN BY

Eric Life-Putnam



#### SEAMLESSLY UPDATED TO FIFTH EDITION BY

Mike Myler

#### ABLY PRODUCED AND FACILITATED BY

Russ Morrissey

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#### OPEN GAME CONTENT

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## Communication Breakdown.

Attempts to communicate with Slate or Flint via magic likely fail. The Obscurati have set up *sending* interceptors in Slate and Flint. If the party uses *sending* or similar magic, an Ob agent receives it and fakes a response. He claims that they're already aware of the party's concerns, and that the king has moved to Shale for safety, but that they should tell no one. A DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that the person is not who he seems to be.

The Ob's interception magic doesn't work if the party uses the *messenger wind* they received from Gale (in ZEITGEIST #2: *The Dying Skyseer*). A properly warned king wants the party by his side as soon as possible.

## Alternate Timelines?

If the party somehow reaches the palace without having rested, the king insists they recuperate and be ready for a fight. Instead the attack happening right away during a wedding, there can be a "war council" meeting, with news coming in about Flint being attacked. That's when the Ob strike the palace.

## Déjà Vu.

The PCs should be immediately struck by the appearance of Torfeld Palace: in particular, the fact that it is a mirror image of Thistle Palace in the Dreaming. Like its twin, Torfeld Palace has three main buildings – in this case, the western Marble Hall, the central Palace Hall, and the eastern Dolomite Hall. Administrative duties are accomplished in Marble Hall, state business takes place in Palace Hall, and public events occur in Dolomite Hall.

1. **Dignitary Lawn.**
2. **Marble Hall – Entrance.** The palace guards – distinctive in their green uniforms – defend this entrance.
3. **Dolomite Hall – Entrance.** Guards also watch this entrance, but in fewer numbers.
4. **Grand Lawn.**
5. **North Colonnade.** The primary entrance for guests and dignitaries.
6. **Entrance Foyer.** The skeleton of a slain dragon tyrant from Ber hangs from the ceiling by wires.
7. **Guard Post.**
8. **Drawing Room.**
9. **State Dining Room.**
10. **Antechamber.**
11. **Diplomatic Reception.**
12. **Library.**
13. **Throne Room.** Guards and druids defend this room even when the king is not present. The throne itself stands at the center of the room's north wall.
14. **Balcony.**
15. **Royal Gallery.** Paintings of former kings.
16. **Principal Minister's Chamber.** Harkover Lee has a few attendants, whom he dismisses twice a day to take his meals in private.
17. **Archdruid's Chamber.** The archdruid is away making funeral arrangements for the late court skyseer. Asrabey Varal currently resides here.

## Prisoners of Risur?

If the party captured Duchess Ethelyn in ZEITGEIST #1: *Island at the Axis of the World*, she is disgraced and has had her title stripped but has nevertheless been allowed to attend the wedding, as she was friends with both the bride and groom. Rituals have stripped her of her magical power, so she is neither a threat nor an asset. Her brother will order her taken for safety to Area 18—Noble's Gallery, and perhaps the party might encounter enemies and have to save her.

Nathan Jierre, if he was taken prisoner, is present for more Machiavellian reasons. King Aodhan knows the Obscurati will make a move at some time, and he wants a Jierre family member close to deter Han Jierre. During the various assassinations, the shadow men (see Assassination: Shadowy Callback) will try to abduct Nathan and carry him away. If the party keeps him close they can distract at least some of their enemies.

## Technological Developments.

In ZEITGEIST #6: *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*, the party might have gained for Risur the innovations of the gnome artificer Tinker Oddcog. The party should have chosen three innovations by now (one at the end of adventures six, seven, and eight), and the latest will be nearing completion when the party returns to the real world.

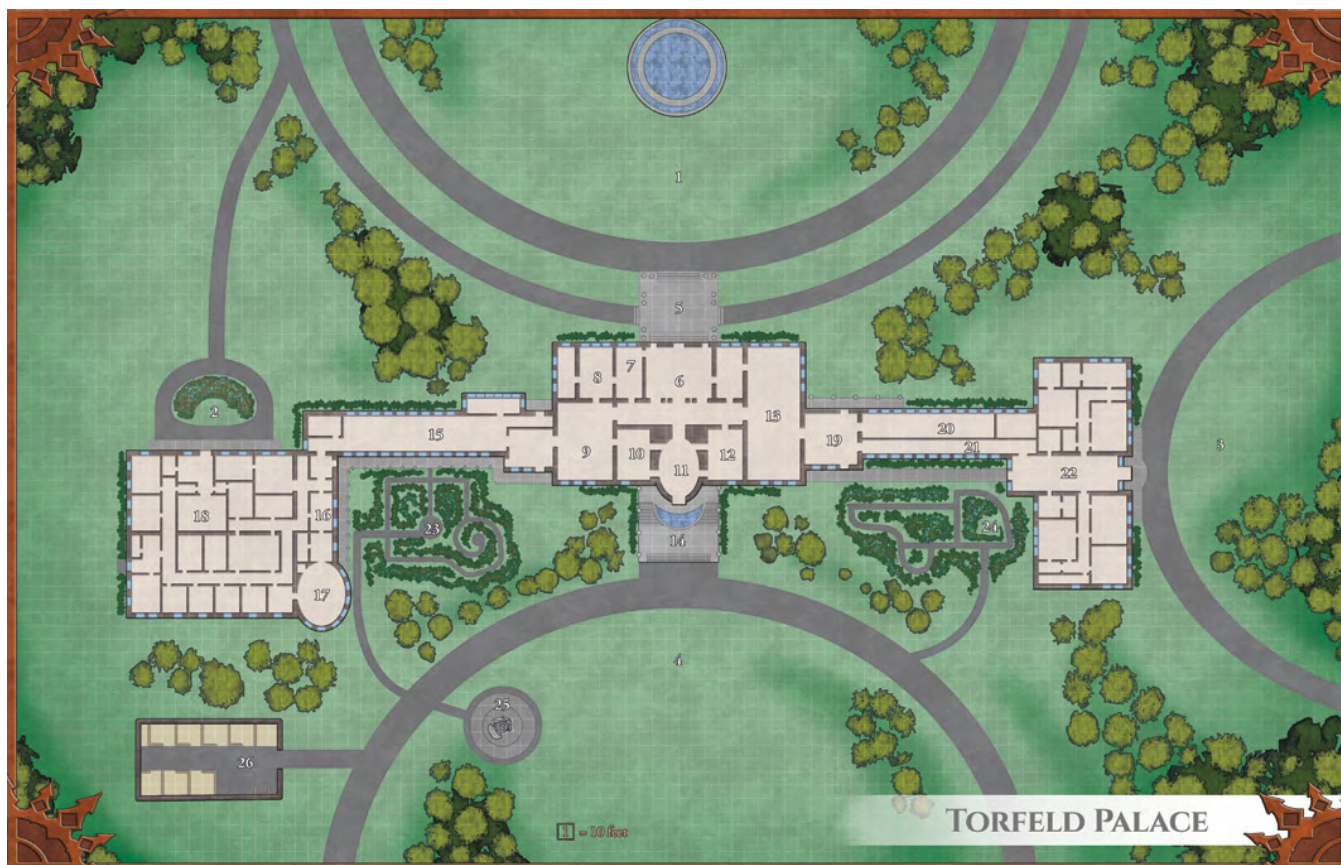
When the PCs reach the real world have them roll an Intelligence and Wisdom check (as explained in Appendix Three of ZEITGEIST #6: *Revelations from the Mouth of a Mad Man*) to see whether the latest innovation is ready. We encourage GMs to implement that technology immediately in the defenses of the palace. Perhaps Tinker coils can be activated near the building entrances, or a couple guards have steam-powered battle suits, or short-range radio communicators mounted in each hall allows coordination between the defenders.

Moreover, if the players wanted to pursue sparkgap radio communication, let them reach a fort nearby the High Bayou from which they can contact Thistle Palace.

In Act Three, if the party had the forethought to pursue rocket technology, they'll have practically no trouble breaching Stanfield's outer defenses.

18. **Nobles' Gallery.** Risuri nobility take turns offering art to hang here. Additionally, a trap door under the carpet here leads to the palace's vault and bunker. The tunnel down is a highly defensible chokepoint, and the bunker has supplies for thirty people to last a month.
19. **Commons.** Where people gather to meet the king.
20. **Party Hall.** The wedding reception will occur here.
21. **Clayton Gallery.**
22. **Offices.**
23. **Unseen Garden.** Pedestals stand here, each with footprints but not figure, to commemorate the lords of the Unseen Court.
24. **Lantern Garden.** Numerous lanterns hang amid the flowers and topiaries.
25. **Titan Shrine.** An identical set of statues in the Waking depicts the five fey titans.
26. **Stables.**





## The Wedding.

King Aodhan officiates from in front of his throne, performing a ceremony to marry **Arla** and **Orlando**, two loyal members of the house staff. Principal Minister Harkover Lee waits close by, always vigilant. Fifty guests stand. Dame Jillian goes to Harkover, who then whispers something to Aodhan. The king curtly pronounces the couple married, then waves the party over to explain what's happening.

In the middle of the party's explanation, all the magical lights in the palace flicker and die. Purple light begins to shine through the windows, and everything takes on the familiar gloom of the Bleak Gate. Harkover ushers the king away from the windows and asks everyone who isn't combat trained to head to the Noble's Gallery in Marble Hall (Area 18). But people begin to scream out in the Commons (Area 19).

## The Obscurati Plan.

From this point on, track events roughly round by round. The palace and everything within about 200 feet is affected by an array of six *wayfarer lanterns* spaced around the palace grounds. Everything in their light starts to transition to the Bleak Gate. In 5 minutes (50 rounds) it fully transitions, barring PC intervention. Between now and then, if someone manages to get more than 200 feet from the palace, he emerges in the real world.

After the palace has fully transitioned though, anyone leaving the light's radius instead emerges fully into the Bleak Gate, where the Obscurati have gathered an army of the dead. The Ob will then snuff their lanterns.

At that point, from the perspective of people in the real world, the palace will suddenly become empty, bare, and decayed as everything within it except the oldest stones have been pulled into the realm of the dead. It won't be possible to cross between the two worlds unless the party has a *wayfarer's lantern* of their own. Only people who took refuge in the bunker beneath Area 18 will still be in the real world.

## Environmental Effects.

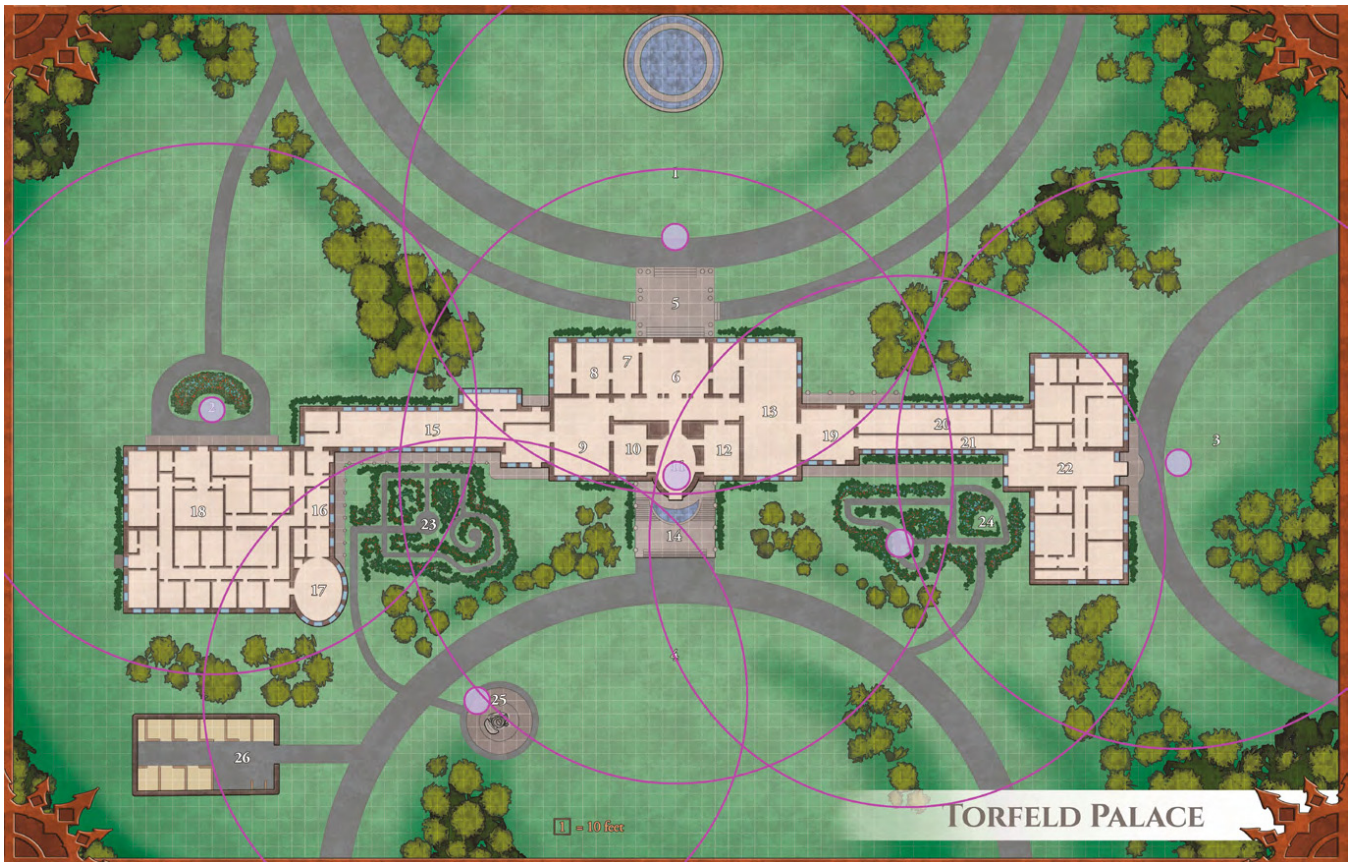
In addition to drawing the palace into the Bleak Gate, the Obscurati lanterns also suppress magic that would create light, flight, or invisibility. Any such magic dies after one round, and since most of the palace's lights are enchanted, battles will likely occur by the dim light coming through the windows from outside, unless someone has a spare hand to carry a torch.

## Array of Threats.

The party likely begins in the throne room (Area 13). Five different threats (and one secret ally) target the king, and an outer perimeter filled with massed undead deter people from fleeing.

- **Catherine Romana and the Rites of Rulership.** Risuri noblewoman Catherine Romana and part of the Obscurati ghost council enter the throne room with hostages. Romana explains the situation and commands Aodhan to surrender, invoking Risur's Rites of Rulership to weaken the king.
- **Dengar Kriegshaff and the Colossal Cannonade.** A Drakran scientist has cannons on the north lawn, which start blowing holes through the palace walls so swarms of undead can enter and kill the weak.





- **Amielle Latimer's Sharpshooting.** The sniper ghost of Amielle Latimer guards a lantern on the palace roof, and though she wants to help the party she is being watched.
- **Skeletal Dragon Tyrant Venkio.** A dragon skeleton kept as a trophy is animated in the entrance foyer and heads for the king.
- **Professor Bugge's Infectious Necromancy.** The dragon was animated by a famous necromancy instructor, who sweeps in with wights and a massive flayed jaguar, targeting the guards and others who are fighting back. The necromancer can also reanimate the undead hordes.
- **Shadow Assassins.** These are the conspiracy's ace in the hole, waiting to strike when the king is vulnerable.

Each of the six Obscurati *wayfarer's lanterns* is 10 feet across and affects a 200-foot radius. Magically reinforced, they have AC 15 and 200 hit points. If a given lantern is destroyed before 5 minutes are up, that portion of the palace will return to the real world, and all the attackers therein will vanish into the Bleak Gate. Any attackers to whom this happens can re-enter the palace if they move into an area still affected by a lantern, so you should continue to track their movement as if they were still in the palace but undetectable and unable to affect or be affected by anything in the real world.

- **Lantern One** is located on Dignitary Lawn (Area 1).
- **Lantern Two** is outside the entrance to Marble Hall (Area 2).
- **Lantern Three** is outside the entrance to Dolomite Hall (Area 3).

- **Lantern Four** is appropriately in the Lantern Garden (Area 24).
- **Lantern Five** sits inside the Titan Shrine (Area 25).
- **Lantern Six** sits atop the roof of Palace Hall, about 50 feet above the entrance foyer (Area 6).

Destroying all six lanterns before the 5 minutes (50 rounds) have elapsed thwarts the assassination attempt (it also strands the Ob operatives in the Bleak Gate, though depending on who's still alive they might eventually be able to reactivate them and return to the real world). See the lantern overlay map above for the ranges and locations of the different lanterns.

### Minor Officers.

In addition to Catherine Romana and Amielle Latimer, named NPCs the party might recognize among the Obscurati include **Dengar Kriegshaff**, a human wizard from Drakr who designed weapons to fight the fey titans and who organizes the giant cannons, and **Tittling Grainet**, a gnome cleric from Crisillyir who is the master of the lanterns and who watches from beside Lantern Six on the roof above Area 6. Neither of them are combatants.

### Unwinnable?

All told this scene – during which the party likely won't get a chance to rest – is an encounter beyond the normal expectations for adventurers of their level. But the party has allies, and they don't face the full force of their enemies all at once. The scene is meant to appear potentially unwinnable, but it isn't necessary for the party to defeat all their foes in order to survive.



## The Good Guys.

Statistics for King Aodhan, Principal Minister Harkover Lee, Asrabey Varal, Dame Jillian the Green Knight, and Amielle Latimer can be found in the Appendix (Allied Stats). The other defenders of the palace do join the fight, but they won't make a significant difference compared to the PCs and these high-level allies.

It's suggested that the GM print these statistics out and let players run them, especially if the party splits up.

## Reinforcements.

On round 20, Lauryn Cyneburg, the RHC's chief infiltration specialist, teleports in and arrives near one of the PCs. She quickly asks what's happening, perhaps helps fight an immediate threat, then teleports away to guide in the reinforcements. Unfortunately it will take more than 5 minutes for allied forces to reach the palace.

One option for help is perhaps more unorthodox: Thistle Palace. If the party secures one of the lanterns they could mix the witchoil with some flammable liquid from the Dreaming (best option: the Borenbog's gourd has plenty of fey spirits). The lantern isn't meant to work that way, but a DC 29 Intelligence (Arcana) check (which can be retried each round) gets the variant oil to light. That lantern would then make the Bleak Gate, the real world, and the Dreaming coterminous. After 5 minutes, the lantern implodes and is utterly destroyed.

Alternately, the party might jury-rig a lantern to pull the Obscurati forces on the Bleak Gate into the real world (DC 29 Intelligence [Arcana] check). Though reinforcements still won't arrive until about round 70, if the fight goes long this would make the Ob easy pickings.

## The Assassination: Coup

### Social. Real-Time.

*Risuri noble Catherine Romana makes a bid for the crown. (Yes, even if the party already killed her.)*

Moments after the lanterns pull the world into the Bleak Gate, people outside see the undead and start screaming, but the Obscurati forces don't attack yet. Dengar Kriegshaff (on the north lawn with the grand cannons) drops the needle onto a primitive phonograph record, and a tinny version of a grand Drakran opera begins to play.

A contingent of the Obscurati ghost council enters the throne room – over a dozen ghosts, each holding a prisoner from Area 19. The prisoners are mostly palace staff, but might also include Etheilyn or other NPCs familiar to the PCs. They make no immediate aggressive moves, but look ready to kill their hostages.

If combat doesn't begin, a round later one of the ghosts nods back the way they came, and in walks Catherine Romana, a Risuri noblewoman (who might have died in *ZEITGEIST #7: Schism*; if so, she's a ghost now). She holds a white cat in her arms.

Romana kindly asks for Aodhan to negotiate for his people's lives.

## Catherine Who?

When last the party met Catherine Romana, she was likely trying to flee the Obscurati Conclave, having voted against Nicodemus's desires. But she's a clever politician, and managed to weave herself back into the conspiracy by promoting this coordinated, multi-part assassination plan.

In particular, Catherine was learning some of the obscure nuances of Risur's Rites of Rulership, ancient magic rules that dictate how power is passed from monarch to monarch.

## Explaining the Rites of Rulership.

If given the chance to talk, Catherine has a speech prepared. Each paragraph takes one combat round, so the party might just rush her, especially if they recall how fast the lanterns work.

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"First, there's no rea son to attack me. After all, loyal followers of Nicodemus shall endure as ghosts for as long as he's safe, and as far as even the ghost council knows, there's no way to truly destroy him. So let's discuss this like civilized people.

"Civilization. Now, Risur's rites of rulership trace back to the first defeat of the fey titans. The titans each command one terrain—mountain, swamp, et cetera. And the monarch of Risur is like a titan too, but his—or her—terrain is civilization. The more faith the people have in society and the state, the stronger the king is. And the stronger the king is, the stronger his people are.

"Normally, that's wonderful. But you know our plans, or at least suspect them. Everywhere else, perhaps the rulers will resist, but the people—the weak-willed, stupid children who we have to take care of—they'll follow us.

"Oh, but not in Risur. It won't do to have a king resisting our new age of reason. **We** will be the lords of civilization, and you'll be the rebels, the...the savages in the wilderness clinging to your old ways.

"King Aodhan, I contest your throne. On this plane, I am a quorum of the nobility, so until you convene a council of the House of Nobles, your powers are hereby revoked, as decreed in the Rites of Rulership. Surrender, and pass on your crown to me, and not only will Risur's people avoid becoming enemies to the entire world, but they will **prosper**."

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Unless the party discussed the Rites of Rulership with Livia Hatsfield during *ZEITGEIST #7: Schism*, they have practically no way of knowing these obscure rules. In particular, the old rites gave the king the power of his people's devotion, but only at the approval of the nobility. However, Romana's plan hits a snag.

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Aodhan sags a bit, but he shakes his head. "Catherine Romana," he says, "you're right about being the only noble on this plane. So with unanimous approval of your fellow nobles, I hereby revoke your title. Constables, I hereby make you all Dukes. We'll work out the details after you kill this traitor for me. Oh, and Harkover: you have my permission."

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At that, Catherine glowers and claps her hands (this is a signal to Dengar Kriegshaff). Outside, the Ob cannons fire their volley.





## The Assassination: Overture

### Action. Tactical.

*Massive cannons breach the walls, and undead hordes press through the hole.*

Just north of the throne room, Dengar Kriegshaff has set up an array of a half dozen colossal cannons, each 20 feet long and attended by 10 (non-combatant) engineers.

A small army of shambling wraiths waits around him. (When people die, their souls linger in the Bleak Gate, but not their bodies, so actual zombies cannot be animated here. But corpses interred in the real world eventually become part of the landscape, and these wraiths consist of souls that have been bound to the shadowy copy of their original dead bodies.)

At a magical signal from Catherine Romana (which occurs when she claps her hands), Kriegshaff orders the engineers to fire, and the blasts tear six holes along the length of the palace's north walls (including one on either side of the throne room). The wraiths surge in, and will reach the throne room in two rounds.

### Catherine Romana and the Ghost Council.

The ghost council doesn't bother killing hostages; instead, they focus on the king and the PCs. Catherine will cast *invisibility* and move away as soon as she's attacked. She shouts, "*Amielle, the king!*" (see Bullseye, below) then summons a **bone devil** before unleashing her enchantment spells. If reduced below half of her hit points, she'll withdraw to one of the lanterns and try to keep coordinating the attack.

### COUP MEMBERS

- Catherine Romana
- 2 senior ghost councilors
- 1 ghost council detachment
- 1 **bone devil**

#### Catherine Romana

Medium humanoid (human), lawful neutral

**Armor Class** 17 (mage armor, ring of protection)

**Hit Points** 65 (10d8+20)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)

**Saving Throws** Dex +8, Con +7, Wis +5

**Skills** Arcana +12, Deception +12, History +12, Intimidation +12,

Insight +4, Nature +12, Perception +4

**Senses** passive Perception 14

**Languages** Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, Primordial, Sylvan

**Challenge** 9 (5,000 XP)

**Feat: War Magic.** Catherine has advantage when she is concentrating on a spell and has to make a Constitution saving throw from taking damage, she can wield weapons or a shield in both hands and still make somatic components for spellcasting, and can use her reaction to cast a spell (maximum casting time: 1 action) at a creature that provokes an opportunity attack from her.

**Ring of Protection.** Catherine gains a +1 bonus on all saving throws (included above).

**Spellcasting.** Catherine is a 10th level spellcaster who uses Charisma as her spellcasting ability (spell save DC 16; +8 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following spells prepared:

**Cantrips:** *druidcraft, eldritch bolt, fire bolt, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*

**1st-level (4 slots):** *command, cure wounds, detect magic, detect*

*poison and disease, find familiar, mage armor, unseen servant*

**2nd-level (3 slots):** *augury, enthrall, invisibility, suggestion*

**3rd-level (3 slots):** *blink, dispel magic, conjure animals*

**4th-level (3 slots):** *confusion, dominate beast, phantasmal killer*

**5th-level (2 slots):** *conjure elemental, hold monster*

**Witch's Familiar.** While she is within sight of her familiar (a cat named Kelland) and both are conscious, Catherine can simultaneously concentrate on two spells at once. If Kelland takes damage while Catherine is concentrating on a spell, Catherine makes a Constitution saving throw to maintain the spell; if she fails the saving throw, she loses concentration on one spell.

#### ACTIONS

**Dagger. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:** +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage.

#### BONUS ACTIONS

**Hex.** Catherine can use a bonus action to activate one of her hexes. This does not provoke opportunity attacks.

• **Agony.** Catherine chooses one creature within 60 feet, inciting vicious pains within it. The target makes a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or is poisoned for 1 minute. At the end of each of its turns, the creature can attempt a new saving throw to end the effect. Whether or not the save is successful, a creature cannot be the target of this hex again for 1 day.

• **Charm.** Catherine chooses a beast or humanoid within 30 feet and beckons to it with soothing, pleasing words. The target makes a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or is charmed for 1 minute. Whether or not the save is successful, a creature cannot be the target of this hex again for 1 day.

• **Disguise.** Catherine can change her appearance for up to 10 hours between long rests (as if she had cast *disguise self*). These hours do not need to be consecutive, but they must be spent in 1-hour increments.

• **Evil Eye.** Catherine chooses one creature within 30 feet that she can see. For the next minute the target takes a -4 penalty to AC or has disadvantage on ability checks, attack rolls, or saving throws (Catherine's choice). A creature that makes a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw reduces the duration of the effect to 1 round.

• **Feral Speech.** Catherine is able to speak with and understand the response of any beast or vermin (as if she had cast the spell *speak with animals*).

• **Slumber.** Catherine chooses a creature within 30 feet and sends it into a slumber. The target makes a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or falls asleep for 1 minute (regardless of its hit points but otherwise as the *sleep* spell). The sleeping creature will not wake due to noise or light. Whether or not the save is successful, a creature cannot be the target of this hex again for 1 day.



**Senior Ghost Councilor**

Medium undead, neutral evil

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 104 (16d8+32)

**Speed** fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

**Saving Throws** Con +6, Wis +6

**Skills** Arcana +12, Deception +12, Insight +10, Intimidation +12, Perception +10, Persuasion +12, Stealth +9

**Damage Resistances** acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

**Damage Immunities** cold, necrotic, poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, poisoned, prone, restrained

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 20

**Languages** Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, Infernal, Primordial

**Challenge** 10 (5,900 XP)

**Ethereal Sight.** The ghost can see 60 feet into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

**Incorporeal Movement.** The ghost can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

**Turn Resistance.** The ghost has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

**ACTIONS**

**Withering Touch.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 46 (12d6+4) necrotic damage.

**Corrupting Touch.** By passing part of its incorporeal body through a creature's body, the ghost deals 72 (14d8) damage. This damage is not necrotic or psychic—it manifests in the form of physical wounds and aches from supernatural aging. Creatures immune to magical aging are immune to this damage, but otherwise the damage bypasses all forms of damage reduction. A DC 16 Constitution saving throw halves the damage inflicted.

**Etherealness.** The ghost enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. It is visible on the Material Plane while it is in the Border Ethereal, and vice versa, yet it can't affect or be affected by anything on the other plane.

**Possession (Recharge 6).** One humanoid that the ghost can see within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 16 Charisma saving throw or be possessed by the ghost; the ghost then disappears, and the target is incapacitated and loses control of its body. The ghost now controls the body but doesn't deprive the target of awareness. The ghost can't be targeted by any attack, spell, or other effect, except ones that turn undead, and it retains its alignment, Intelligence, Wisdom, Charisma, and immunity to being charmed and frightened. It otherwise uses the possessed target's statistics, but doesn't gain access to the target's knowledge, class features, or proficiencies.

The possession lasts until the body drops to 0 hit points, the ghost ends it as a bonus action, or the ghost is turned or forced out by an effect like the *dispel evil and good* spell. When the possession ends, the ghost reappears in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the body. The target is immune to this ghost's Possession for 24 hours after succeeding on the saving throw or after the possession ends.

**Telekinetic (Recharge 5–6).** The ghost can use telekinetic force to move creatures about. It makes a Charisma check contested by the creature's Strength check. If it wins the contest, it moves the creature up to 30 feet in any direction, including upward but not beyond 60 feet. Until the end of its next turn, the creature is restrained in the ghost's telekinetic grip. A creature lifted upward is suspended in mid-air. On subsequent rounds, the ghost can use a bonus action to attempt to maintain its telekinetic grip on the creature by repeating the contest.

**Ghost Council Detachment**

Large swarm of Medium undead, neutral evil

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 150 (20d10+40)

**Speed** fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)

**Saving Throws** Con +6, Wis +6

**Skills** Athletics +6, Arcana +12, Insight +10, Perception +10, Religion +12, Stealth +9

**Damage Resistances** acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing

**Damage Immunities** cold, necrotic, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 20

**Languages** Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, Infernal, Primordial

**Challenge** 12 (8,400 XP)

**Carry Off.** The ghost council detachment can use a bonus action to try to grapple up to 2 corporeal creatures. It has advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks made to grapple or maintain a grapple. A grappled creature automatically takes damage from the ghost council detachment's eldritch grasp each round.

**Ethereal Sight.** The ghost council detachment can see 60 feet into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

**Incorporeal Movement.** The ghost council detachment can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

**Oppressive Moan (Recharge 6).** The ghost council detachment lets loose a terrifying moan as a bonus action. Each creature within 60 feet of it that can hear it moan takes 28 (8d6) thunder damage and must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. At the end of each of its turns, a frightened creature can repeat its saving throw to end the effect. On a successful save, a creature takes half damage and is not frightened.

**Swarm of Ghosts.** The ghost council detachment can occupy another creature's space and vice versa. The ghost council detachment can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points. The swarm needs only fill 9 contiguous 5-foot squares, and can stretch across a battlefield. Enemies can move through the ghost council detachment, which counts as difficult terrain. The damaged ghosts disincorporate but will return in a few days unless Nicodemus the Gnostic is defeated.

**Turn Resistance.** The ghost council detachment has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.





## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The ghost council detachment attacks twice.

**Eldritch Grasp.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

*Hit:* 19 (4d6+5) necrotic damage plus 7 (2d6) energy damage (either acid, cold, fire, or lightning, chosen when the ghost council detachment attacks). A creature can only be targeted by one of the ghost council detachment's eldritch grasp attacks each turn.

**Poltergeist Activity (Recharge 6).** The ghost council detachment uses an action to make an Intelligence check that is contested by a Strength check made by every creature within 50 feet. When the ghost council detachment wins a contest, a creature is moved up to 30 feet in any direction it chooses, including upward but no further than 50 feet. In addition, until the end of its next turn, the creature is restrained in the ghost council detachment's telekinetic grip. A creature lifted upward is suspended in mid-air.

**Etherealness.** The ghost council detachment enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. It is visible on the Material Plane while it is in the Border Ethereal, and vice versa, yet it can't affect or be affected by anything on the other plane.

**The Undead Horde.**

More than a thousand semi-corporeal wraiths fill the grounds of Torfeld Palace, a hundred of them guarding each of the six lanterns while hundreds more surge through holes in the wall of the palace. Even more horrific shadow beasts wait beyond the edge of the light, ready to attack if the palace is fully pulled into the Bleak Gate.

One horde goes through each hole in the palace walls; two of them will converge on the throne room two rounds after combat begins. The others are intended to split the palace's defenders along the length of the building.

## ROAMING UNDEAD

- 6 wraith assassination hordes (page 15)

**The Cannnade.**

It takes several rounds to reload the cannons, but on round 11 of the encounter Dengar can fire them again. If the cannons are attacked, his engineers withdraw (since their job is done). Thereafter the party can try to make use of the cannons. Gunsmith PCs can use their own attack bonus; otherwise, the ungainly cannons have a +10 bonus to ranged attack rolls.

**Grand Cannon**

**Special:** Mounted on massive turrets, the cannons require a bonus action to adjust their aim. Only a single bonus action can be spent this way per round, and the turret can only adjust its aim 45 degrees per move action. The cannon has a short range of 200 ft., long range of 600 ft., and deals 28 (8d6) bludgeoning damage on a hit.

**Getting and Using Allies.**

At the start of the assassination plot, the party is likely with the King, Harkover, and Dame Jillian in the throne room. The king trusts the party to have good tactical sense, and lets them decide where each of them are best deployed. Harkover's magic handles large groups well, and Jillian is literally impossible to kill unless the sun is up, making her an ideal bodyguard. Aodhan excels against singular foes, but if you're planning to have a PC take the crown and become Risur's next monarch, Aodhan makes a point to fight beside him or her. He tries to find a good time to mention that he wants to name the PC as his successor.

Amielle Latimer is on the roof over the entrance foyer of Palace Hall (Area 6), but she will only help the PCs if she isn't surrounded by Obscurati forces.

Asrabey is in Area 17 practicing yoga, and once the lanterns turn on it takes him just one round to be ready for combat. But if the party does not go to him he observes what's happening outside his window and waits until round 15 to join the battle. If left to his own devices he goes after lantern five in Titan Shrine (Area 25). By round 20 he's finished off the Obscurati squad and has set his lion shield to gnawing on the golem, but he withdraws so as not to be overwhelmed by the wraiths. He relies on his shield to finish them off, and in round 30 he heads off to find the king.

Finally, if the party gets bystanders to the bunker and vault under Area 18, they can make use of various rare magic items. You can come up with items worth a total equal to the number of PCs times 50,000 gp, or use some of the following items.

- +3 *dragon's bane longsword* (When you roll a 20 on an attack roll made with this weapon against a dragon, the dragon must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or die.)
- *mace of disruption*
- *helm of brilliance*
- *ring of spell storing*
- 10 *potions of superior healing*
- 2 *potions of frost giant strength*
- *potion of flying* (note that the Ob lanterns dispel the flying effect after 1 round)



**Amielle Latimer.** A hundred years ago Amielle brought her one-of-a-kind rifle to Flint and lent her keen marksmanship toward defeating the witches of Cauldron Hill. That olive branch opened up the city to investment by industrialists from Danor, which had by that point fought two painful wars with Risur. Amielle proposed the plan to Nicodemus, and it worked like clockwork.

A grandiose woman with grandiose plans, she is only stymied by the fact that she died eighty years ago, and while she endures as part of the ghost council her influence is weak. She has for the past few months only feigned loyalty to the conspiracy; she agreed with the need to alter the world, but not how the Ob have gone about it. But she knows any sign of disobedience will spell her demise, so she bides her time.

Amielle still remembers life fondly, and she often disagrees with her fellow ghosts, showing her disapproval with piping sarcastic laughter.



## The Assassination: Bullseye

### Action. Tactical.

*A spectral sniper guns for the king.*

The sixth lantern sits atop Palace Hall, guarded like the rest (by 2 Obscurati squads, a Bleak Lantern golem, and a wraith assassination horde; see Overture). The ghost of Amielle Latimer is stationed there as well, having volunteered to protect **Tittling Grainet**, a gnome cleric tasked with keeping the lanterns in working order.

Amielle wants to somehow aid the party, but she knows she cannot move openly against the Obscurati. Indeed, to avoid drawing attention she has to keep up appearances and shoot at the palace's defenders; if the ghost council gets suspicious they'll annihilate her.

At some point during this prolonged scene – likely at Catherine Romana's command, or when the party leaves the palace so she can see them – Amielle fires a shot and intentionally wings the king, dealing just 1 damage. She'll continue to wing the PCs round after round, also for 1 damage each, hoping to draw their attention to the roof. She'll only attack the Obscurati's forces if she sees that a PC is in danger, or if it is the last foe (if everyone is dead, no one can tattle on her).

### Lending Aid.

If the party gets to the roof, Amielle will phase through the roof into the palace's attic so she can avoid combat. Once the lantern's defenders are defeated (see Destroying the Lanterns, below), she'll emerge and say she wants to help.

Most importantly, she tells them that Stanfield is going to perform a ritual tomorrow night in Flint, but if it can be disrupted they can protect Risur at least. The PCs probably already know this, but if they've somehow missed it, Amielle can make the timeline explicit.

Thereafter she wants to follow the party and help in a fight. The ghost council will target her above all other threats. Amielle's statistics can be found in the Appendix (Allied Stats).

### Ongoing Alliance.

The ghost council will know of Amielle's betrayal, and if she's destroyed Nicodemus will rejuvenate her solely so they can interrogate her. Understanding this, Amielle will offer to lend her aim to them, but says it isn't safe to ever tell her any plans. She can be a resource in future adventures, if she survives.

## The Assassination: Tyrant's Revenge

### Action. Tactical.

*A dragon skeleton kept as a trophy animates and attacks.*

An enormous dragon skeleton, animated by Professor Bugge (see below), breaks free from its wire mountings in the Entry Foyer (Area 6) and goes on a rampage. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) check recalls that this dragon was Venkio, a copper-scaled dragon tyrant who would melt those who disobeyed him in vats of acid. Though initially a simple brute, as it rampages it consumes souls, awakening the spirit of the original tyrant and empowering its magical abilities.

The skeleton fights until it reaches 180 hp. Then it burns an exit hole and tries to withdraw, but will swoop back in the next time the party is engaged in another fight. Once reduced to 90 hp, it withdraws and defends Catherine Romana if she still lives.

#### FOYER FOES

- 1 skeletal dragon tyrant

#### Skeletal Dragon Tyrant

Huge undead, chaotic evil

**Armor Class** 19 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 270 (20d12+140)

**Speed** 40 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 200 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
28 (+9)	10 (+0)	25 (+7)	22 (+6)	25 (+7)	25 (+7)

**Skills** Arcana +12, Deception +13, Insight +13, Intimidation +13, History +12, Perception +13, Performance +13, Persuasion +13, Stealth +6

**Damage Resistances** cold, lightning, necrotic

**Damage Immunities** acid, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons





**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 240 ft., blindsight 120 ft., passive Perception 23

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Dwarvish, Elvish, Gnome, Halfling

**Challenge** 18 (20,000 XP)

**Innate Spellcasting.** The dragon's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 21; +13 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

**At will:** grease, hideous laughter, stone shape

**Magic Resistance.** The dragon has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Slow Aura.** Incorporeal chains float around the dragon, mimicking the actual wires that once dangled from its body from the palace ceiling. At the start of its turn, any creatures within 5 feet of the dragon must make a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw or be slowed (as the *slow* spell) for 1 round.

**Soul Consumption.** When a living creature within 30 feet of the dragon dies, that creature's soul is torn from its body and pulled into the dragon's maw if the dying creature fails a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw. The dragon regains a number of hit points equal to the dead creature's Hit Dice. Creatures that have their souls consumed in this way can only be brought back to life through *true resurrection*, *wish*, or similarly powerful magic.

**Soul Magic.** The dragon does not have spell slots. Instead, whenever the dragon wishes to cast any one of its spells known, it consumes a number of hit points from its Soul Ward equal to the spell slot level necessary to cast the spell. If the Soul Ward has insufficient hit points, the dragon cannot cast that spell. Casting a spell that reduces its Soul Ward to exactly 0 hit points does not harm the dragon (though it is not comfortable without this buffer of soul-energy and tries to replenish it quickly).

**Soul Ward (10 of 21 hp).** An intangible field of siphoned soul energy protects the dragon from destruction. This ward has 21 maximum hit points, but starts at 10. Whenever the dragon would be reduced below 1 hit point, all damage in excess of that which would reduce it to 1 hit point is instead dealt to its Soul Ward. If this damage reduces the Soul Ward to fewer than 0 hit points, the dragon is destroyed. Whenever the dragon scores a critical hit with a melee attack, it bestows a level of exhaustion and adds 5 hit points to its Soul Ward. It adds 1 point to its Soul Ward for each level of exhaustion inflicted by either of its breath weapons.

**Spellcasting.** The dragon is a 16th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 21, +13 to hit with spell attacks). The dragon knows the following spells from the sorcerer's spell list:

**Cantrips (at will):** *dancing lights, light, mage hand, message, minor illusion, prestidigitation*

**1st level (Soul Ward):** *alarm, detect magic, identify, magic missile, shield, silent image*

**2nd level (Soul Ward):** *invisibility, see invisibility*

**3rd level (Soul Ward):** *dispel magic, haste, major image, tongues*

**4th level (Soul Ward):** *confusion, polymorph, stoneskin*

**5th level (Soul Ward):** *seeming, teleportation circle*

**6th level (Soul Ward):** *eyebite, move earth*

**7th level (Soul Ward):** *prismatic spray, reverse gravity, teleport*

**8th level (Soul Ward):** *power word stun*

**Turn Resistance.** The dragon has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The dragon can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (2d10+9) piercing damage.

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d6+9) slashing damage.

**Tail Slap.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (2d8+9) bludgeoning damage.

**Breath Weapons (Recharge 5–6).** The dragon uses one of the following breath weapons.

• **Corrosive Breath.** The dragon exhales acid in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw, taking 27 (6d8) acid damage and 27 (6d8) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature that fails its saving throw by 10 or more gains a level of exhaustion.

• **Slowing Breath.** The dragon exhales gas in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature can't use reactions, its speed is halved, and it can't make more than one attack on its turn. In addition, the creature can use either an action or a bonus action on its turn, but not both. These effects last for 1 minute. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself with a successful save. In addition, a creature that fails its saving throw by 10 or more gains a level of exhaustion.

**Crush.** The dragon rampages, stomping through a line 20 feet across and 40 feet long. Creatures in the area make a DC 23 Dexterity saving throw or take 18 (2d8+9) bludgeoning damage. On a successful save, a creature takes half damage. Instead of making a save, a creature in the dragon's path can make an opportunity attack with disadvantage.

**Terrifying Presence.** Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature that fails its saving throw by 5 or more is panicked instead, dropping everything it carries and moving away from the dragon. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

#### REACTIONS

**Uncanny Dodge.** When an attacker the dragon can see hits it with an attack, it can use its reaction to halve the attack's damage against it.

#### LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

• **Detect.** The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

• **Tail Attack.** The dragon makes a tail attack.

• **Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions).** The dragon beats its wings. Each creature within 10 feet of it must succeed on a DC 23 Dexterity saving throw or take 16 (2d6+9) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The dragon can then fly up to half its flying speed.





## The Assassination: Pardwight

### Action. Tactical.

*Under the command of a famed professor of necromancy, wights and a massive flayed jaguar sweep through the palace, killing and turning everyone they find.*

Professor Jon Bugge, formerly a necromancy instructor at Pardwight University in Flint, has been working in a remote laboratory for the Obscurati for decades. Now the withered old man hobbles through battle, his thick brogue voice ordering about wights that were once his most promising students. His presentation tonight is a giant flayed jaguar like the ones the party first encountered in *ZEITGEIST* #2: *The Dying Skyseer*.

The wights swarm the PCs while Bugge uses his spells to aid his minions and hinder the party.

### UNDEAD EDUCATOR

- Professor Bugge
- 4 dread wights
- 1 flayed dire jaguar

### Professor Bugge

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil cleric (death) 15

**Armor Class** 16 (+1 mithral half plate)

**Hit Points** 112 (15d8+45)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)

**Saving Throws** Wis +9, Cha +8

**Skills** Arcana +8, Insight +10, Medicine +10, Religion +8

**Senses** passive Perception 15

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Elvish, Giant, Primordial

**Challenge** 13 (10,000 XP)

**Channel Divinity (2/Short Rest).** The professor can channel divine energy directly from his deity, using that energy to fuel one of the following magical effects.

- ♦ **Death's Touch.** When the cleric uses a melee weapon attack to hit a creature, he can use this feature to deal an additional 35 necrotic damage.
- ♦ **Turn Undead.** As an action, the professor presents his holy symbol and speaks a prayer censuring the undead. Each undead within 30 feet that can see or hear him must make a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw. If the creature fails its saving throw, it is turned for 1 minute or until it takes any damage. An undead that fails its saving throw is instantly destroyed if its challenge rating is 3 or below. A turned creature must spend its turns trying to move as far away from the professor as it can, and it can't willingly move to a space within 30 feet of him. It also can't take reactions. For its action, it can use only the Dash action or try to escape from an effect that prevents it from moving. If there's nowhere to move, the creature can use the Dodge action.

**Deadly Magic.** When the professor deals necrotic damage, he ignores resistance to necrotic damage.

**Deadly.** When the professor targets a creature with *chill touch*, he can choose an additional creature to target as long as the second target is also within the cantrip's range and adjacent to the first.

**Divine Intervention (1/Long Rest).** Using an action, the professor rolls percentile dice. If he rolls a number equal to or lower than 15, his morbid deity intervenes. The GM chooses the nature of the intervention; the effect of any cleric spell or cleric domain spell would be appropriate. If the deity intervenes, he can't use this feature again for 7 days.

**Feat: War Magic.** The professor has advantage when he is concentrating on a spell and has to make a Constitution saving throw from taking damage, he can wield weapons or a shield in both hands and still make somatic components for spellcasting, and can use his reaction to cast a spell (maximum casting time: 1 action) at a creature that provokes an opportunity attack from him.

**Spellcasting.** The professor is a 15th-level spellcaster that uses Wisdom as his spellcasting ability (spell save DC 18; +10 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following spells prepared from the cleric's spell list:

**Cantrips:** *chill touch, guidance, light, resistance, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*

**1st-level (4 slots):** *bane, bless, command, detect magic, false life, fog cloud, protection from evil and good, shield of faith*

**2nd-level (3 slots):** *blindness/deafness, enhance ability, hold person, ray of enfeeblement*

**3rd-level (3 slots):** *animate dead, dispel magic, magic circle against evil and good, spirit guardians, vampiric touch*

**4th-level (3 slots):** *blight, death ward*

**5th-level (2 slots):** *antilife shell, cloudkill, dispel evil and good, hallow*

**6th-level (1 slot):** *create undead*

**7th-level (1 slot):** *symbol*

**8th-level (1 slot):** *earthquake*

**Verbal Instruction.** The professor is able to use the Help action to aid an ally making an ability check that he can see within 30 feet.

**Well-Read.** The professor has advantage on checks and saving throws related to mundane or magical glyphs, runes, scrolls, symbols, and other writings.

### ACTIONS

**Quarterstaff.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

*Hit:* 1 (1d6-2) bludgeoning damage plus 9 (2d8) necrotic damage, or 2 (1d8-2) bludgeoning damage if wielded with two hands plus 9 (2d8) necrotic damage.



**Dread Wight**

Medium undead, neutral evil

**Armor Class** 19 (natural armor)**Hit Points** 168 (16d8+96)**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	16 (+3)	22 (+6)	15 (+2)	17 (+3)	19 (+4)

**Saving Throws** Int +6, Wis +7**Skills** Intimidation +8, Perception +7, Religion +6, Stealth +7**Damage Resistances** necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities poison

**Condition Immunities** exhaustion, poisoned**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 17**Languages** Common**Challenge** 9 (5,000 XP)**Resurrection Vulnerability.** A *raise dead* or similar spell cast on the wight destroys it. Casting the spell in this way does not require a material component.**Sunlight Sensitivity.** While in sunlight, the wight has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.**ACTIONS****Multiattack.** The wight attacks three times.**Life Drain.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature.*Hit:* 10 (2d6+3) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or its hp maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hp maximum to 0.

A humanoid slain by this attack rises 24 hours later as a specter, unless the humanoid is restored to life or its body is destroyed.

**Longsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.*Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10+3) slashing damage if used with two hands. In addition, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or its hp maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hp maximum to 0.

A humanoid slain by this attack rises 24 hours later as a specter, unless the humanoid is restored to life or its body is destroyed.

**Longbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) piercing damage.**Flayed Dire Jaguar**

Large monstrosity, unaligned

**Armor Class** 19 (natural armor)**Hit Points** 147 (14d10+70)**Speed** 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	19 (+4)	21 (+5)	2 (-4)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

**Saving Throws** Dex +8, Wis +7, Cha +6**Skills** Acrobatics +8, Athletics +11, Perception +7, Stealth +12**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages —

**Challenge** 10 (5,900 XP)**Corrupted Blood.** When a creature uses a weapon that does not have reach to deal damage to the jaguar with a melee attack, it takes 10 (3d6) necrotic damage (DC 17 Dexterity saving throw halves).**Keen Smell.** The jaguar has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.**Pounce.** If the jaguar moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a claw attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 19 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the jaguar can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.**Running Leap.** With a 10-foot running start, the jaguar can long jump up to 35 feet.**Witchoil Vessel.** An adamantine plate is bolted directly into the jaguar's ribcage and pulses with black oil that leaks like the beating of a heart. As an action, a creature can make a DC 18 Strength check to tear the steel plate off, taking a -1 penalty to the check for every 10 feet the jaguar moved on its last turn. When the plate is removed, the jaguar takes 30 damage and any additional attack that hits it kills it immediately.**ACTIONS****Multiattack.** The jaguar attacks once with its bite and twice with its claws.**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d8+7) piercing damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 19).**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d6+7) slashing damage.**REACTIONS****Vicious Rend.** When the jaguar hits the same target with its bite and claw attacks on its turn, it can use its reaction to deal an extra 10 (4d4) slashing damage.



## The Assassination: Shadowy Callback

### Action. Tactical.

A gang of assassins who have been granted familiar shadow powers try to kill Aodhan.

Four elite members of the *Porteurs de Mort* who were nearly killed by the party in the previous adventure were saved by the same procedure that afflicted Cillian Creed in *ZEITGEIST #2: The Dying Skyseer*. These shadow men, lacking Creed's proficiency with disguises, simply appear as matte black.

At the start of the assault, they split up and place wreathes of rusted metal on the walls of the palace, to help ensure that it will be pulled into the Bleak Gate. They might be spotted at that time from afar (DC 32 Wisdom [Perception] check), but they don't engage until at least round 20. At that point they have regrouped, and they wait for the king to be vulnerable, and preferably engaged in a fight. Then they strike, and will not withdraw until the king is dead.

### SHADOW MEN

- 4 Bleak Gate killers

#### Bleak Gate Killer

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

**Armor Class** 18 (studded leather, shield)

**Hit Points** 104 (16d8+32)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

**Saving Throws** Dex +9, Con +7, Wis +5

**Skills** Acrobatics +14, Athletics +7, Deception +9, Intimidation +9, Perception +10, Performance +4, Sleight of Hand +14, Stealth +14, Survival +5

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 20

**Languages** Common, Primordial

**Challenge** 13 (10,000 XP)

**Assassination (1/Turn).** During its turn, when the killer strikes a creature that it is hidden from, its first hit against the surprised creature is a critical hit.

**Cunning Action.** On each of its turns, the killer can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

**Evasion.** If the killer is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, the killer instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

**Hide in Plain Sight.** The killer can Hide even while being observed or when there is nothing for it to hide behind.

**Incorporeal Movement.** The killer can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

**Slaying Targets.** The killer can use a bonus action to study a creature. The killer gains a +3 bonus to ability checks, attack rolls, and damage rolls against a slaying target and can have up to 3 slaying targets at a time.

**Sneak Attack.** Once per turn, the killer deals an extra 14 (4d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the killer that isn't incapacitated and the killer doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

**Supreme Sneak.** The killer has advantage on a Dexterity (Stealth) check if it moves no more than half its speed on the same turn.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The killer attacks three times.

**Eclipse Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10+5) magical slashing damage plus 14 (4d6) necrotic damage.

**+1 Hand Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6+5) magical piercing damage.

#### REACTIONS

**Uncanny Dodge.** When an attacker that the killer can see hits it with an attack, it can use its reaction to halve the attack's damage against it.

## The Assassination: Destroying the Lanterns

### Action. Tactical.

*Destroying the lanterns ends the assassination plot.*

The six lanterns are each guarded by two dozen soldiers, who wear bloodstone and opal amulets that temporarily grant them resistance to necrotic damage and darkvision 60 ft., and which keep the semi-mindless wraiths from attacking them. Looting these amulets would aid the party immensely, though they only last for a few hours.

Those guards are themselves defended by a horde of wraiths, which surround a golem similar to the witchoil ones the party has fought previously. This one is much improved, however, and the necrotic energy of its *bleak aura* actually heals the undead (the lantern on the roof has no golem – they couldn't get one up there – but they thought Amielle Latimer would be a sufficient defender in its place.)

The lanterns are spaced close enough that the soldiers at one end might be able to lend fire to help others, but they don't move far from their assigned location.

Each lantern has AC 15 and 200 hit points. A successful DC 22 Intelligence (Arcana) check can dim it, shrinking the area of light to a 25-foot radius; another check can turn it off, though Grainet could relight it quickly, and even the soldiers could turn it on again with enough time. With the right fuel, a DC 29 Intelligence (Arcana) check can adjust it to make the real world, the Dreaming, and the Bleak Gate all coterminous at once within its radius.

#### LANTERN DEFENDERS (PER LANTERN)

- 2 Obscurati squads
- 1 Bleak Lantern golem (not at Lantern Six)
- 1 wraith assassination horde





### Obscurati Squad

Gargantuan swarm of Medium humanoids, lawful neutral

**Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 86 (9d8+36)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	17 (+3)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

**Saving Throws** Dex +6, Wis +5

**Skills** Athletics +8, Perception +8, Survival +8

**Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

**Senses** passive Perception 18

**Languages** Common, Primordial

**Challenge** 7 (2,900 XP)

**Chaos of Combat.** Any creature that is adjacent to or in the swarm's space has a hard time focusing on magic. A creature casting a spell or concentrating on a spell makes a Constitution saving throw (DC 15 + spell level) or loses the spell.

**Antimagic Chaff Grenades (1/Day).** The swarm can use a bonus action to throw a grenade at a square within 60 feet where it explodes in a 30-foot radius. Each creature in the area must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 21 (6d6) piercing and slashing damage, or half as much on a successful save. Creatures damaged by the grenade are targeted by a dispel effect (as *dispel magic*), and until the damage is healed a creature must make a concentration check (DC 15 + spell level) to cast a spell. For the next 5 rounds, any creature attempting to cast a spell within the area must make a concentration check (DC 15 + spell level) or lose the spell.

**Swarm.** The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Medium creature. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

#### ACTIONS

**Bayonets.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (4d4+5) piercing damage, or 10 (2d4+5) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.

**Fusillade.** The swarm fires a fusillade of bullets in four 200-foot lines that are 5-foot wide. Each creature in the line must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 25 (4d10+3) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.



### Bleak Lantern Golem

Large construct, unaligned

**Armor Class** 19 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 126 (12d10+60)

**Speed** 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	9 (-1)	20 (+5)	3 (-4)	11 (+0)	1 (-5)

**Damage Vulnerabilities** radiant

**Damage Resistances** necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons not made from adamantite

**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

**Languages** understands Common but can't speak

**Challenge** 10 (5,900 XP)

**Bleak Aura.** Wailing spirits coil in a 15-foot radius around the golem, drawn by the witchoil that fuels it. A living creature that enters the area or ends their turn there takes 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. Undead creatures instead regain 10 (3d6) hit points.

**Immutable Form.** The golem is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

**Magic Resistance.** The golem has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The golem makes two melee attacks.

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6+5) magical bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage from witchoil splashing out of the golem.

**Tracer Cannon (Recharge 5–6).** The golem fires a hip-mounted cannon at a space within 200 feet. The shot explodes in a 10-foot-radius burst of bright light. All creatures in the area make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save a creature is blinded for 1d4 rounds and takes 28 (8d6) fire damage, or on a success is not blind and takes half as much damage.

### Wraith Assassination Horde

Gargantuan swarm of Medium undead, lawful evil

**Armor Class** 18 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 152 (16d8+80)

**Speed** fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	16 (+3)	21 (+5)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	21 (+5)

**Saving Throws** Dex +7, Int +6, Cha +6

**Skills** Arcana +6, Insight +10, Intimidation +13, Perception +10, Persuasion +10, Stealth +11

**Damage Resistances** cold, lightning

**Damage Immunities** necrotic, poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 20

**Languages** Common, Infernal

**Challenge** 11 (7,200 XP)

**Incorporeal Movement.** The swarm can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.



## Surprise Guests?

If you intend to end the campaign with this adventure, to wrap up dangling plot threads involving Benedict Pemberton, you should include the following scene.

Benedict Pemberton has two duplicants in the palace—they're innocuous members of the palace staff, controlled remotely from a villa he owns south of Flint. When the attack begins, Pemberton (at his Yerasol Island lair) takes control of one and has his chief henchgnoll Pardo take control of the other. This changes their appearances to match what they really look like; ideally this can happen right next to one of the PCs.

Pemberton's goal is to seek an eleventh-hour alliance with Risur against the Obscurati. His two duplicants here are useless in a fight; they don't even have kill switches to let them explode when they're destroyed. But he knows the Ob have something planned for Flint, and he's volunteering to help.

Well, "volunteering" is the wrong word. "Agreeing to help if Risur lets Pemberton Industries be chief manufacturer of weapons for the inevitable upcoming war with Danor," is more accurate. Or he'll accept a duchy.

If the new monarch of Risur agrees, Pemberton makes an appearance in his full draconic glory in Act Three. If the campaign is going to continue, though, Pemberton shows up in the next adventure, having seized control of Axis Island.

**Lifeseense.** The swarm can use a bonus action to reach out and perceive flowing blood, pinpointing the location of any living creature within 60 feet of it.

**Sunlight Sensitivity.** While in sunlight, the swarm has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

**Swarm.** The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Medium creature. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

### ACTIONS

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (4d6+5) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

## The King Is Dead!

### Social. Montage.

*In the aftermath of the assassination plot, the party takes stock.*

Around seven minutes after the attack begins, hundreds of Risuri soldiers start streaming to the palace, commanded by the local garrison colonel but guided by Lauryn Cyneburg and Viscount Nigel Price-Hill. They're too late to fight anyone from the Bleak Gate unless the party got clever and found a way to drag them into the real world.

If Aodhan lives, he gives orders to make sure no other forces can surprise them, sends for as many healers as possible for the wounded, then gathers the PCs and appropriate NPCs to discuss what comes next. If he died or was captured, either have Price-Hill give these orders, or if you plan to make one of the PCs king, Har-kover suggests it to that PC.

### War Council.

Communication magic cannot reach Flint, and multiple sources have said Governor Stanfield is about to perform a ritual for the Obscurati. The obvious mission now is to get to Flint and stop him, and omens suggest tomorrow night might be the last night in the world. The R.N.S. *Impossible* waits on the Great Delve River, and with all the magic they can muster it could reach Flint by about 9:00 PM the following night. Ships in Shale could be rallied as well, though they wouldn't be fast enough.

Teleportation still isn't an option, but the party might ride with the Great Hunt again. They again need a few hours to rest their steeds, but they could get to Flint by 6:00 PM. The party has to make plans with limited information. *Sending* spells won't work, but divinations still might, if asked about something other than Stanfield himself.

### Long Live the King!

If the king has died, a new one should be crowned quickly, though a formal coronation with pomp and circumstance will have to wait. It will take an hour to prepare the *Impossible* for travel (and 6 hours for the Great Hunt), and before that time, a hurried session of the lords of Risur is called together.

If you don't think any of your PCs are monarch material, Nigel Price-Hill is chosen as the best choice to become king. Otherwise, it's time for one PC to be in the spotlight.

First, though, the lords ask for witnesses to the character of the heir. Give each PC a chance to speak on behalf of appointed successor, and if their testimony is sufficient, the lords vote and approve the PC as the new monarch of Risur. An aged steward produces a worn leather book written in rough, hand-scribed text. From it he recites a ten-minute declaration of the rites of rulership, after which the office of the king is formally transferred. See Appendix @@: Magic and Training for details of the powers of the king.

If Aodhan is alive, he names a successor, and then seeks approval from the nobles, in a similar process to above. He'll keep his crown for now, but realizes he needs a clear line of succession in case of disaster.

### In the Air and the Earth.

When the party sets out from Slate, they feel a change in the air. Winds gust, and they feel like the world is shuddering beneath them. The Axis Seal is about to be opened.

If the PCs have any of the golden icons of the various planes crafted by the Ancients (Avilona, Nem, and Urim in ZEITGEIST #1: *Island at the Axis of the World*, Apet in ZEITGEIST #3: *Digging for Lies*), opening the seal floods them with more power, so they function as if they were on Axis Island. During Stanfield's ritual in the next act, however, they lose all their powers.

# Act Three: Pillars of Heaven

**I**N THIS ACT, THE PARTY ATTACKS THE BEST-DEFENDED Lighthouse in the world.

## Foolproof Villainy

If the party hadn't gotten involved, the king would be dead and Stanfield's ritual would go off without a hitch. There would still be trouble at the Axis Seal due to interference by the Voice of Rot, and after less than a year – a year filled with madness, collapsing social structures, and extraplanar invasions – the white serpent would destroy the world.

However, the Obscurati do plan for opposition. Threats they've considered are Gale and her ability to fly (hence the domed shield over the fortress), the Coaltongue's brand (which is why they have it seized and garrisoned), and others you think are important. Of course, we want the players to figure out how to beat them, so if they have a clever idea, perhaps they can outwit even the geniuses of the Obscurati.

## A Moment of Calm

### Social. Montage.

*News and allies arrive to help the party stop Stanfield's ritual in Flint.*

The party makes their way to Flint, on the *Impossible* or with the Great Hunt or by some other means they devise (if they have their own ship, they likely haven't seen it since ZEITGEIST #8: *Diaspora*, but it could be docked in Flint waiting for them, or in another Risuri coastal city.) The party might bring along allies, but unless the players are particularly attached to someone, we suggest allies “fade into the background” once the party reaches Flint. They can handle challenges that the PCs aren't.

Maybe Asrabey hews through Ob agents who are searching the Cloudwood for Gale and her allies; together the two eladrin can sabotage the Danoran fleet. Dame Jillian goes to rescue Captain Dale and his men atop Cauldron Hill, where the wards are failing; once rescued, they help evacuate people from the slums, fearing a disaster. Lauryn Cyneburg gathers soldiers from the Battalion military academy and teleports them (and their cannons) into positions around the city so they can fire upon the Danoran ships. Viscount Price-Hill likely stays behind in Slate to prepare for war.

One ally who asks to stand beside the party is Harkover Lee. He has served Risur's monarchs for two centuries, and he would like to continue. He explains his history as a former dragon tyrant, but swears his loyalty to the new king or queen.

(If Aodhan lives, he leads the attack. Honestly, we think it's most appropriate he perish before the adventure ends so a PC can take on the responsibilities of ruling.)

## Campaign Finale?

If you want to end the campaign here, you'll need to alter a few scenes.

The colossus starts by devastating ships on the PCs' side, but when things are looking grim, Pemberton and a small fleet of duplicant-crewed ships show up to even the odds, firing Oddcog-designed weapons that break through the colossus's defenses. No single hit is enough to weaken the titan, but Nicodemus pulls it back anyway and orders it to begin the ritual.

The colossus sets the golden plate down in the center of the governor's mansion fortress; it sinks into the earth and conjures a starmap on the surface. Meanwhile Stanfield uses the lighthouse to stabilize chaotic energies that burst from the ground. The colossus plants stone pillars in the starmap, each linked to one new world. If the party can disrupt Stanfield's control of the lighthouse, the energy stuns the colossus. They can then climb aboard (or, if they've let the Ob switch the plane of air, fly on the back of Pemberton and Harkover, who return to dragon form), in order to install a device from Oddcog that grants them manual control. Nicodemus will fight them, but they can drive him into the witchoil forge at the colossus's heart, consuming his spirit and fueling a final push to alter reality in their own way.

## Ship Graveyard.

If the party sails to Flint, about 20 miles west of the city they find the wreck of Flint's garrison fleet. A few survivors survive on their crippled ships, and can speak of how they must have been betrayed. Flint's fleet followed the intelligence the governor shared, and they sailed into a field of submerged mines (called “torpedoes”), which exploded and hulled many vessels.

The Danorans knew exactly where they'd be, and with many ships out of commission, the Risuri forces were easy pickings. The attackers didn't even take prisoners for ransom, or claim ships as salvage, instead rushing ahead and leaving a thousand men to die. If the party can't spare the time to bring the men to shore, other ships from Shale will be along soon to accomplish the job.

## Final Reverie.

An hour or so outside the city, the sun has already set, and you might want to devote a scene to the party making final plans and having a moment to reflect and talk – as they rest for a bit on the deck of the ship, or while the Hunt's horses take a breather.

Consider which Flint NPCs you want to involve in this final act, what elements of the party's past endeavors deserve to be revisited, and what sorts of choices the PCs could be forced to make if they wish to succeed. Either Captain Rutger Smith of the *Impossible* or Riffian, head of the Great Hunt, asks the party to regale him with stories of their city, so that he might know what the heroes fight for. This gives you an opportunity to remind the party of potential allies and avenues of attack.

Whichever route the party takes to Flint, they'd be wise to enter quietly. Captain Smith can drop the party off in the bayou west of the city, near the Battalion academy of martial science. The Great





Hunt need some sleep, at least, and will take the party no farther than the city limits. They arrive by 9:00 PM, and have until about 6:00 AM, in the predawn hours, to act.

Whenever they do launch their final assault, stars start to fall from the sky, but be flexible with just when Stanfield begins his ritual.

### City Bonds.

These are suggested ways the party can gain an upper hand, assuming they don't just sail straight into Flint Harbor alone.

### Dockers.

If a PC has close ties to the dockers, you might have them greeted by Thames Grimsley, who's ready to organize a counter-attack against the Danoran fleet that will cost many lives. Danoran ships keep guns trained on the docks, so as cover the PC might be asked to call in the Flint police to stage a fake riot; the dockers and police get close enough to the ships without looking hostile, and then can rush aboard and try to launch before they're sunk.

### The Family.

Parties who have had friendly dealings with The Family might seek aid from Morgan Cippiano, who is attending a funeral with hundreds of mourners. A bereaved family member might indicate romantic interest in one of the PCs, offering a chance to join the family (and the Family). The criminals agree to help – perhaps using holy magic to sneak the party onto the garrisoned *Coaltongue* and claim it – but first ask the party to be blessed in a Clergy church.

### Skyseers and the Old Faith.

The common people of Flint still revere the old faith, and the few novice skyseers still active in the city have been foretelling doom, reminding people to avoid Cauldron Hill, per the final warning of Nevard Sechim. But people are scared, and they hope to hear a new vision to reassure them. The stars, however, reveal no future after tonight.

### Gale and the Vekeshi Mystics.

Gale could come to the party on behalf of the Vekeshi Mystics, offering their aid in sabotaging the Danorans if the new monarch pledges to laud their efforts and no longer treat the secret society as enemies of Risur. At night, a flying woman and her allies can easily sneak aboard rumbling steamships and cripple their engines.

Gale also offers an even greater deed. The Obscurati have worked some magic over the harbor to prevent her from making the weather hostile to them, but she thinks she can leech some its power to control the clouds over the city. The people of Flint deserve to know what is happening, and may need to know that they have a new king who will defend them. Gale will be able to let a PC speak from the sky for a few minutes. The clouds will take on his countenance, and his voice will carry across the entire city. Whether the PCs want to urge calm or send out a call to arms, they will have Flint's undivided attention.

## Danoran Defenses and Other Hazards.

You might just have spies report this information to the party, but some groups could enjoy directing their various avenues of information to learn what the Danorans are up to, and what other problems beset Flint.

### The Fleet.

The Danoran Fleet consists of a trio of battleships and a half dozen grand steam frigates guarding targets of value, a dozen steam frigates in a line blockading the harbor entrance, two dozen medium steam warships on patrol in the central harbor, and a handful of support vessels.

Spies report spotting a spectral figure on the deck of *Praepollens Auctoritate*, the flagship. A pair of the grand frigates keep their cannons trained on the *Coaltongue*, which is berthed at the Royal Docks.

### Naval Minefield.

The mouth of Flint Harbor has been seeded with floating mines (called "torpedoes"). Danoran ships still sail through the area, so either they have precise maps, or have some way to deactivate the mines (the answer is the former; they have clear parameters where to sail and where to avoid).

### Coaltongue Garrison.

Over 300 Danorans guard the Risuri flagship. They attempted to claim it as their own, but somehow its enchanted engine will not ignite at their command. The ship's original engineer, Geoff Massarde, is allegedly in hiding, and Danoran spies are offering rewards for anyone who hands him over (the tiefling is loyal to Risur, and has taken refuge with factory owner Heward Sechim, since he recalled hearing the alchemist was on good terms with the PCs, who he hopes will save him).

### Governor's Island Defenses.

The Governor's Island has an outer government district surrounded by a modest wall. Inside that, heavier walls defend the Governor's Island Fortress, and in its center is the 40-foot high keep surrounded by a 20-foot deep dry moat.

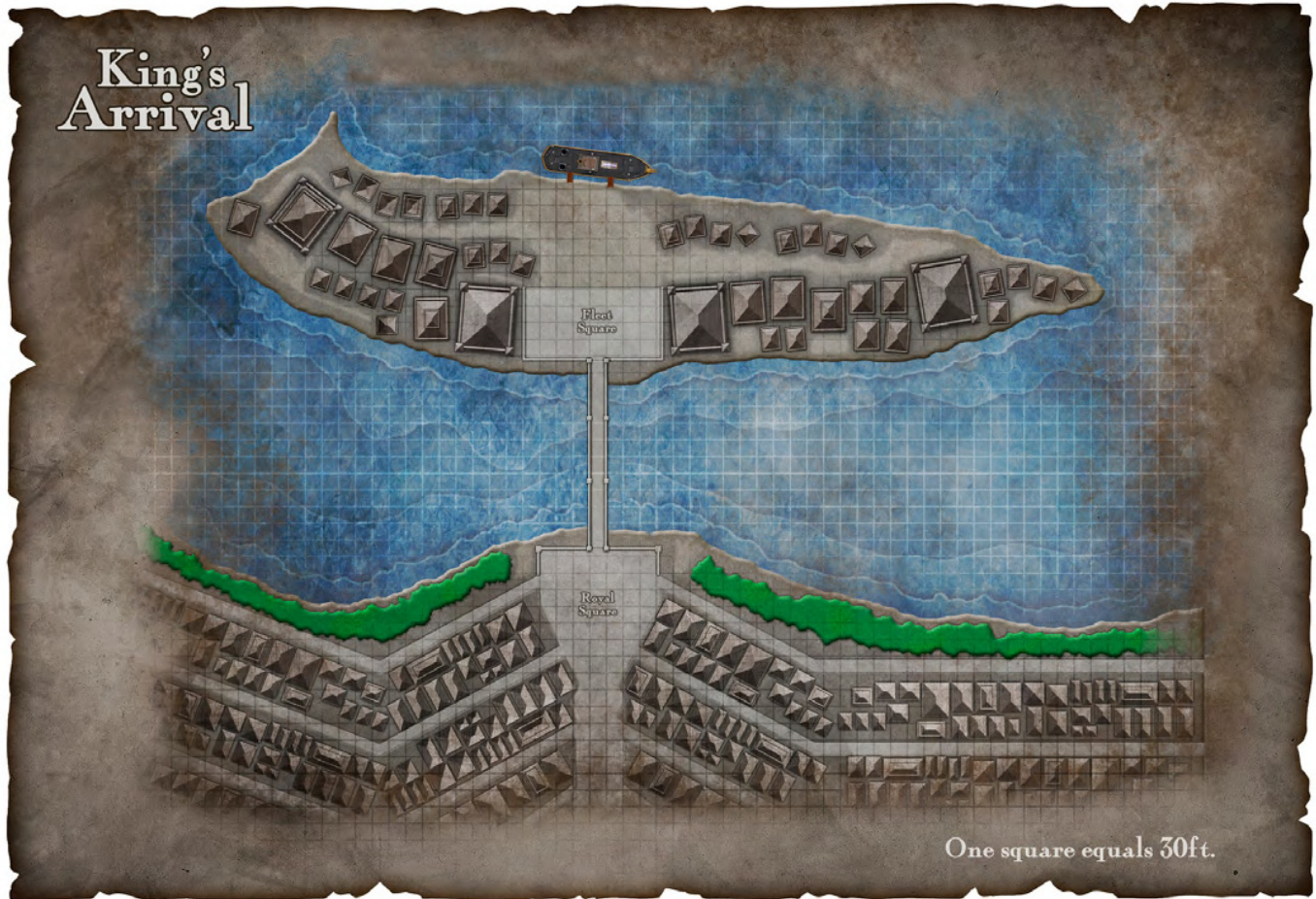
Stanfield evacuated all non-essential personnel from his mansion fortress, and then destroyed the bridge to the mainland. Shortly thereafter some people spotted a tarp over the central keep's roof being pulled away revealing something like a lighthouse. Then a magical barrier that is translucent like burnt glass surrounded the fortress, rising up like a dome several hundred feet high.

The government district is accessible but deserted. A scout who got onto the island found the barrier surrounding the fort impenetrable, but otherwise harmless. Any PC proficient with Arcana who gets a look at the magical dome over the fort can surmise that it could be broken with sufficient damage (like a naval bombardment) or antimagic (dispelling a 9th-level spell), but likely any opening would be brief before the shield reformed.

Stover Delft was on the island when it was sealed off. His last orders to the RHC were to keep the city on defense, and to prepare for a siege (no one knows that Inspector Delft has been replaced by a doppelganger).



## King's Arrival



### Ravens Atop Cauldron Hill.

No one has seen birds flying to the mountain top, but somehow they're appearing: thousands of ravens perched in trees, growing in number hour by hour. The district mayor's mansion, now controlled by Captain Dale, has launched flares as if to call for help, but no one who has gone up has returned (evil spirits have possessed several of Dale's men, and the rest have locked themselves into the remains of the old hidden laboratory of Mayor Macbannin. The flares are sent by the spirits to lure in more possible hosts.)

### Fish Gone Mad.

Sea life has begun beaching itself around Flint harbor, and the shores are covered with seagulls gorging on dead fish. The wildlife knows She Who Writhes is coming.

## Flint and Steal

### Action. Tactical.

*The party retakes the R.N.S. Coaltongue.*

The R.N.S. *Coaltongue* has enough firepower to take down the magical barricade around the Governor's Island Fortress.

A total of 400 soldiers defend the Royal Docks, and 500 feet away are two grand frigates that have their guns trained on the ship, ready to sink it if Risur tries to reclaim it. The party needs to find a way to distract the Danorans if they want any chance of

### Skyseer Full Circle.

If you have a skyseer in the party, the last vision they get before arriving in Flint is of a crowd, a purple ribbon, and a broken tin whistle. Some of these same images appeared in the first vision at the beginning of the campaign, and here they refer to a purple ribbon tied around the *Coaltongue's* conning wheel, and explosives packed in the engine room, near the same alarm siren that saboteurs damaged in ZEITGEIST #1: *Island at the Axis of the World*.

actually using the vessel.

Possible solutions include swimming onto the frigates and defeating their crews first, or pulling off an absolutely stealthy attack on the *Coaltongue* garrison, or launching a diversion with other ships (which will be sunk quickly) to give them time to get the *Coaltongue* up and running.

Even if the party can claim the ship, the Danorans have a fail-safe: the propeller mechanism of the *Coaltongue* is packed with explosives, which will shatter the hull and cripple the ship if not disabled. Of course, the party has saved this ship from sinking once or twice before.

#### COALTONGUE GARRISON

- 4 Danoran companies
- 2 steam walkers
- 12 Danoran lookouts

#### FRIGATE OVERWATCH

- 2 grand frigates (each with another two Danoran companies on board)





## SHIP LAYOUT.

The R.N.S. *Coaltongue* has a wooden hull sheathed with 5-inch thick iron armor plating, engraved with subtle magical icons of defense and power. Measuring 205 ft. long with a beam of 50 ft. and a draft of 20 ft., the warship has three lower decks and a two-story command bridge amidships the maindeck. The steam engine, powered by heating a boiler with burning firegems, gives the vessel a top speed of 18 knots (roughly 20 miles per hour).

A heavy turret on the main deck fires enchanted shells in a forward arc. Twenty-three cannons line the gundeck, which is capped at the rear by the galley. When being pursued, this room can be converted into a firing platform.

Below that is the berth deck, with the ship's magazine at the bow and quarters for the ship's wizard and guests at the stern. The engine deck contains the engine, fuel bins, and various cargo.

The bridge's main level contains quarters for captain and officers, while the second story command deck has speaking tubes to various sections of the ship, and is where the captain must stand to direct the Brand.

All the lower decks have sections of grated floor panels to help circulate air. Characters easily have line of sight, but not necessarily line of effect, through this grating.

### CAPACITOR AND BRAND.

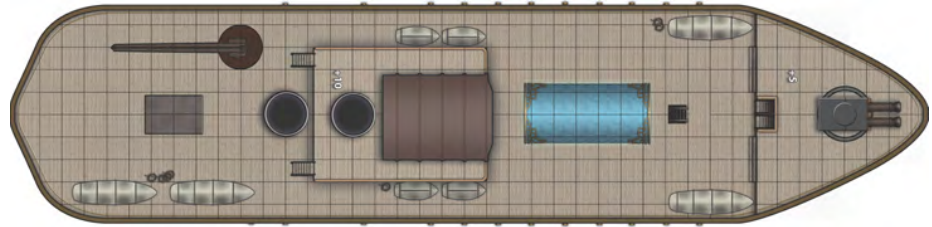
On the *Coaltongue's* maindeck sits an elaborate glass frame, reinforced by magic to be as strong as steel, and shaped in a half-cylinder to resemble the boiler of a train locomotive. While its design is partially aesthetic, intended to evoke the power of Risur's new industry, this innovative structure is Risur's greatest trump card against Danoran warships: a magical capacitor.

Excess energy from the steam engine is stored in thin metallic etchings within the structure. Even while storing its full power, the interior of the capacitor is perfectly safe to walk through, and its expansive windows let it serve as venue for ceremonies and celebrations. But the primary purpose of the capacitor is to power attack spells of the ship's warmages, and to charge the Brand.

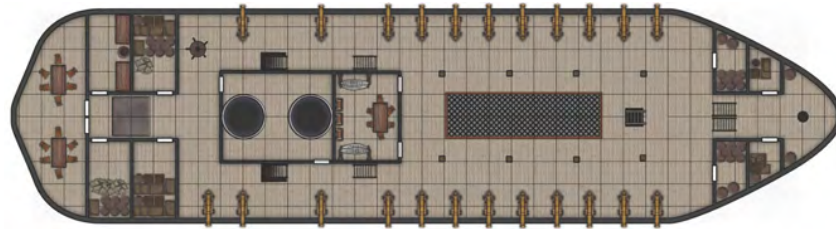
The Brand—so named because it burns an image into any surface it strikes—fires a massive blast of pyromantic energy from the ship's figurehead, often enough to outright destroy a smaller

### R.N.S. *Coaltongue*.

#### MAIN DECK.



#### GUN DECK.



#### BERTH DECK.



#### ENGINE DECK.



vessel and cripple a larger one. Its range is limited to about a hundred feet, and after firing it takes hours to recharge the capacitor, but combined with the *Coaltongue's* speed and maneuverability, the Brand should deter attacks by Danor's navy.

### GOLDEN WARD.

The gunports, windows, and main deck are all ringed by a thin inlay of gold wire. As detailed in the Player's Guide, this decorative work prevents teleportation across any opening so ringed.





### Terrain and Tactics.

One Danoran company waits inside the *Coaltongue*, distributed across a few decks. They can attack from the superior cover of the gunports; however, they take 2 rounds to respond to any alarms. Another company actively keeps watch along the dock beside the ship, and have set up simple barricades to provide cover. The remaining two companies are inside the two nearest warehouses.

Each of the warehouses is also guarded by a steam walker, a 10-foot tall bipedal construct piloted by an elite soldier. These are based on designs of Tinker Oddcog, and while the gnome was a cleverer inventor, the Danoran military has much great coffers, so these walking machines carry enchanted weapons. They use their Arcane Shield to try to protect the soldiers, and they're trained enough to recognize magical attacks and choose the right type of energy resistances.

A dozen lookouts keep watch. Six patrol the deck of the *Coaltongue*, two watch from the roofs of the warehouses, and two roam the rest of the royal docks. They carry primitive rockets that when fired illuminate the sky with red light.

As for the two grand frigates, *Aula Alba* and *Cervus Vigilius*, they each have a crew complement of two hundred who can engage the party if boarded. The party's incredible power likely lets them storm through all those crew hardly a scratch, but if either ship sees its sister has been taken, or if they see the *Coaltongue* about to be claimed, they'll fire their cannons.

### Bombardment.

The Danoran companies all carry flares, which they can launch to light up the night. However, if they believe the party is far enough from them to be safely targeted by the ships, they'll shoot their flares at the party, marking them for bombardment (the party might wise up to this and trick the frigates into shooting the companies.)

Each round, two cannons fire at the general location of the flare. For each ship that can see the target area, two cannonballs strike different areas. Each strike deals 21 (6d6) fire damage in a 15-foot radius (DC 18 Dexterity saving throw for half damage) and leaves behind a smoking crater.

If the party is on the *Coaltongue*, use the normal rules for striking and damaging the ship (make a single attack each minute.)

### Starting the Boiler.

Dealing at least 100 fire damage to the interior of the boiler activates the *Coaltongue*, though its capacitor and brand won't be charged for 1d4 minutes. Without magic, the enchanted boiler takes 5 minutes to warm up enough for action.

### Rigged to Explode.

Explosives are stacked in dark corners of the engine room, out of easy line of sight and primed to detonate if the screws begin to turn. If the party doesn't check for sabotage, as soon as they take the ship out, it takes two strikes to the propulsion and starts to sink slowly (requiring one save every 10 minutes to avoid descending 10 feet).

Disabling the explosives requires 5 minutes and a DC 16 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check. Every 3 points of success shaves a minute off the time.

### Aftermath.

If the *Coaltongue* starts to move, half the Danoran fleet swoops in to sink it. See Home Sea Advantage, below.

#### Danoran Company

Gargantuan swarm of Medium humanoids, lawful neutral

**Armor Class** 19 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 170 (20d8+80)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	17 (+3)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

**Saving Throws** Dex +7, Con +8

**Skills** Athletics +10, Perception +9, Stealth +7, Survival +5

**Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

**Senses** passive Perception 19

Languages Common

**Challenge** 11 (7,200 XP)

**Chaos of Combat.** Any creature that is adjacent to or in the swarm's space has a hard time focusing on magic. A creature casting a spell or concentrating on a spell makes a Constitution saving throw (DC 15 + spell level) or loses the spell.

**Grenade Volley.** The swarm can use a bonus action to throw a grenade at a square within 60 feet where it explodes in a 30-foot radius. Each creature in the area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 42 (12d6) piercing and slashing damage, or half as much on a successful save.

**Swarm.** The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Medium creature. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

#### ACTIONS

**Bayonet Flurry.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (4d6+6) piercing damage, or 13 (2d6+6) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.

**Fusillade.** The swarm fires a fusillade of bullets in four 200-foot lines that are 5 feet wide. Each creature in the line must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 36 (6d10+3) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

#### Steam Walker

Large construct, unaligned

**Armor Class** 20 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 142 (16d10+48)

**Speed** 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	23 (+6)	16 (+3)	1 (-5)	12 (+1)	1 (-5)

**Saving Throws** Int +0, Cha +0

Damage Immunities poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

**Challenge** 13 (10,000 XP)

**Arcane Shield.** The steam walker uses a bonus action to choose an energy type. Until the end of its next turn, the steam walker and allies



within 20 feet gain damage resistance to that type of energy.

**Piloted Construct.** A steam walker relies on a pilot to control its motions. Use the statistics for a Danoran Lookout, below, although the pilot does not act independently from the steam walker. The pilot has total cover and normally cannot be targeted by attacks. Whenever the steam walker fails a saving throw against an attack that deals energy damage (or if some other attack penetrates the suit to damage the pilot), the pilot gets progressively more panicked. On the first failed save, the steam walker can only move at half speed. On the second failed save, the steam walker has disadvantage on ability checks and attack rolls. On the third failed save, the pilot falls unconscious and the walker becomes completely inert.

**ACTIONS**

- Multiattack.** The steam walker attacks four times.
- Chain Sword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (3d6+7) slashing damage.
- Shotgun.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, range 30/90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d8+6) piercing damage.

**Danoran Lookout**

Medium humanoid (human), rogue (thief) 5

**Armor Class** 17 (studded leather, shield)

**Hit Points** 32 (5d8+10)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

**Saving Throws** Dex +6, Int +3

**Skills** Acrobatics +9, Athletics +6, Insight +4, Intimidation +5, Perception +7, Sleight of Hand +6, Stealth +6

**Senses** passive Perception 17

Languages Common

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Cunning Action (1/Turn).** The lookout can take a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, Hide, Use Object action, to make a Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check, or to use thieves' tools to disarm a trap or open a lock.

**Feat: Mobility.** The lookout can Dash through difficult terrain without requiring additional movement. Whenever it makes an attack against a creature, the lookout doesn't provoke opportunity attacks from that creature until the end of its turn.

**Second-Story Work.** Climbing does not cost the lookout extra movement. When the lookout makes a running jump, the distance it covers increases by 3 feet.

**Sneak Attack (1/Turn).** The lookout deals an extra 10 (3d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the lookout's that isn't incapacitated and the lookout doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

**ACTIONS**

**Shortsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) piercing damage.

**REACTIONS**

**Uncanny Dodge.** When an attacker the lookout can see hits it with an attack, the lookout can use its reaction to halve the attack's damage against it.

**Doing the Impossible.**

The party might decide to sail straight into Flint Harbor on the fast but lightly-armed *Impossible*. They have to navigate the floating torpedoes and get past a dozen frigates. Even if the Danorans cannot catch them, the party won't be able to get close to either the *Coaltongue* or the island without getting attacked. But if they lure She Who Writhes like a fey fox luring the Great Hunt, they might stand a chance.

**Home Sea Advantage**

**Action. Tactical.**

*With the party at the lead, and a fey titan somewhat on their side, the Risuri navy attacks the Danoran fleet in Flint Harbor.*

The party might engage the Danoran fleet several ways – with the *Coaltongue*, with a ragtag fleet of dockers, on the *Impossible*, and so on. Use the following elements to pace a large naval battle, culminating with Lya Jierre's flagship, *Praepollens Auctoritate*, closing so the tiefling ghost can engage them personally. Of course, if the party has other ideas, go with it. They might even make it onto the island without ever firing a single cannon, rush through the abandoned government district as the Danorans try to shell them, then use a ritual to create a crack in the dome shield. In that case, when the governor's ritual is disrupted the Danorans beat a hasty retreat, losing a third of the fleet to She Who Writhes.

Ship and sea monster stats for this encounter can be found in the Appendix (Naval Forces).

**Battle Elements.**

This is a huge battle, so keep the focus on the party's actions. You only need to keep rough track of where the Danoran ships are. If the party's on the ball, they won't have to engage the entire force at once.

**Scale of the Harbor.**

The mouth is about 4 miles wide. It's about 7 miles from the mouth to the Governor's Island, or 8 miles to the Royal Docks. It would take the *Impossible* about 20 minutes to cross that distance, and a little longer for the *Coaltongue*, though clever engineers can shave a little off.

**Falling Stars and Ominous Lights.**

Overhead, the heavens shift and stars literally fall from the sky, a few every minute. They plunge silently, then flash and sizzle as they strike the water. None of these projectiles will interfere with the battle, however: only one star will actually collide with anything, and that's at the adventure's end.

The lighthouse atop Stanfield's keep begins to glow, though it is initially muted by the translucent magical shield defending the fort.

**Line of Battle.**

There has not been a major naval engagement at fleet scale for 8 years, and so the Danorans' tactics with their newly-improved steam warships are untested. Even they identify the PCs, the Danorans don't commit their entire force against them, fearing a trick. A dozen steam frigates form a line blockading the harbor entrance,



leaving the three battleships, four grand frigates (or six if the party didn't handle the pair guarding the *Coaltongue*), and a variety of smaller vessels occupying the harbor itself. At over 4 miles across, the harbor still has plenty of room, and at night it might even be possible to sneak a sailing vessel past the Danorans.

### Stealthy Approach.

A ship with a steam engine has no chance of sneaking through the harbor, unless the party can conjure a thunderstorm or something to mask the sound. For a sailing vessel, there's a slim chance.

Four general areas of the harbor are under observation: the mouth of the harbor (moderate watch), the harbor center (light watch), Governor's Island (heavy watch), and the Royal Docks (light watch). If the party is going elsewhere, they can move freely.

It takes 5 minutes to pass through the moderately-watched harbor mouth, 8 minutes to sneak through the heavy watch around the Governor's Island, and 2 minutes to either pass through the harbor center or get past the grand frigates watching the *Coaltongue* at the Royal Docks.

Each minute, the captain or lookout must succeed on a DC 22 Wisdom (Perception) check, representing keeping aware of the Danorans' locations, and knowing how the party's ship will appear against the city lights of Flint. A successful check determines where any Danoran ships are within 1,000 feet.

Next, the captain or navigator must succeed on a DC 22 Dexterity (Stealth) check (DC 26 if the Wisdom [Perception] check failed). A failed check alerts one of the Danoran ships, which will launch a rocket that hangs in the sky and illuminates the rough area of the party's ship for 1 minute.

If they intentionally try to enter the same stage as another ship, they make their Dexterity (Stealth) check with disadvantage.

### Torpedoes.

The naval minefield is a variant "catch hazard." Each minute that a ship is in the minefield, the Captain must make a DC 17 Dexterity (vehicle [water]) check with disadvantage due to the ship's size (for either the *Impossible* or *Coaltongue*). A lookout can make a Wisdom (vehicle [water]) check instead of the captain.

On a failed check, make an attack against the ship with a +12 bonus to hit. Strikes inflicted this way can only damage parts of the ship below the water line, which is typically Hull Integrity, as well as Propulsion for the *Coaltongue*.

The minefield is thin and long, so a ship trying to speed through it is only in danger for 1 minute.

### Scattered Battles.

Unless the party screws up, they probably only have to fight a few ships at a time. If the party avoids a battle the enemies give chase, which might result in the party being pincered by multiple encounters' worth of enemies at once. Even then though, the Danoran fleet won't commit all its forces against one vessel and about half keep their distance.

While the *Coaltongue* is resilient, there's a limit to how much punishment it can take. If the party is reckless in engaging enemies, they're liable to end up with a crippled ship. Of course, they have enough personal strength to probably seize another ship and

continue the fight, though they might be short on crew.

**Harbor Mouth:** A first wave consists of three frigates, which try to drive the party into the torpedoes. Two minutes later, another trio of frigates joins up with the first wave.

**Harbor Center:** The enemy being widely spaced, the party only encounters one steamship, which will flee and try to reach the next nearest ship, one or two turns later. They continue to try to find allies while making their way to the battleships near the Governor's Island, and at most six steamships engage the party.

**Royal Docks:** Two grand frigates watch the *Coaltongue*.

**Governor's Island:** Forced to watch both sides of the island, it takes a while for the defenders to converge on the party. Start with one grand frigate, then a battleship arrives the next minute, then another grand frigate, then Lya Jierre's own *Praepollens Auctoritate*.

### Release the Kraken.

Beshela, Archfey of the Sea appears at some point, leaping from the surf and landing on the deck of the PCs' ship. She hurriedly explains that whatever the party did after they left Thistle Palace caused She Who Writhes to awaken. Now the fey titan seeks to contest the monarch of Risur for control of her domain.

She Who Writhes has chosen the form of a colossal kraken, and she creates a massive wave as she enters Flint Harbor and sets off several of the torpedoes. They barely harm her.

For the rest of the naval encounter, the fey titan pursues the party, discouraging them from sitting still. She's slow, though, which gives the party the option to lure her so she crosses paths with their enemies. She'll angrily crush and drown any vessel in her path.

If She Who Writhes is within 1,000 feet of the party's ship, and if the PCs are in the same stage as another ship or in an adjacent stage, the party can choose to have disadvantage on the Dexterity (vehicle [water]) check. If so, they can draw She Who Writhes toward one vessel whose vehicle (water) check they beat.

### Ghostly Duel.

Lya Jierre has been brought back as a ghost by Nicodemus the Gnostic, and is wholly devoted to seeing the Obscurati's plans to fruition. But (barring particularly boorish behavior by the party in the past) she understands and respects the party's need to defend their homeland. No grudge stirs her to anger, not even if the constables dropped her into lava in Pemberton's volcano lair (see ZEITGEIST #6: *Revelations from the Mouth of a Madman*).

She views them as equals, and recognizes that of all the forces in Flint Harbor, she has the best chance to defeat them. That said, respecting them isn't the same as fighting fair. Lya is above all else intelligent, and will use her new powers to their fullest.

Lya likely first spots the party by spyglass as they near Governor's Island. From the prow of *Praepollens Auctoritate* she flares with white fire to draw their attention, draw her sword and nods to them, then gives the order to make ready to board. The battleship roars and unleashes a constant barrage of cannonfire as it tries to come alongside the party's vessel.

When the two ships are near, Lya orders the hold open to release her "pet": a mechanical dragon powered by witchoil. Then like any good swordfighting villain, she closes to melee and holds





a conversation as she duels (alternatively, the party might want to talk first, then fight.) In battle she lets the dragon keep most of the party occupied, and tries to draw off whichever PC she'd most enjoy trading words with. She likely also has a full crew of hundreds of soldiers.

## BATTLE WITH LYA JIERRE

- Lya, the lost Jierre scion
- Draconic witchoil golem
- 2 Danoran companies (see above)

This chatty swordfight should have a different tone from the challenge proclaimed by Catherine Romana in the previous act, and from Roland Stanfield's deconstruction of Risur's flaws in the climax. Lya talks instead about why she believes the conspiracy is necessary.

"It's an honor to cross blades with you again. Despite our past disagreements and their consequences," she briefly flares with ghostly fire, then smiles, "this is not personal for me.

"I won't try to persuade you with compassion. Nicodemus cares about saving the world from suffering. He and I both have seen wars, and bloodshed. We agree it must stop. But for different reasons.

"It wasn't the atrocities I saw, or the horrible wounds my friends suffered that bothered me most." (Try to time this with her cutting off someone's limb.) "It was that there was no place for reason. When I'm honest with myself, a stranger's suffering—it doesn't bother me. But a mind left fallow, poisoned by desperation? That is cruel.

"You're loyal and decent. I respect that. But a new age of reason is upon us. Your time is past."

### Lya, the Lost Jierre Scion

Medium undead, lawful neutral

**Armor Class** 21 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 170 (20d8+80)

**Speed** fly 30 ft. (perfect)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	22 (+6)	19 (+4)	20 (+5)	13 (+1)	20 (+5)

**Saving Throws** Dex +11, Con +9, Wis +6

**Skills** Acrobatics +11, Athletics +3, Deception +10, Insight +11, Perception +11, Performance +10, Stealth +11

**Damage Resistances** acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

**Damage Immunities** cold, necrotic, poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhausted, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 21

**Languages** Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, Infernal

**Challenge** 16 (15,000 XP)

**Dancing Lantern Blaster (1/Turn).** Beside Lya floats a strange carbine built around a glass lantern (AC 21, 50 hit points). Once per round on her turn, she can choose a target within 100 feet to fire it at (spell attack +10; 4d6 damage). Each time she fires it, Lya chooses one of the following types of damage for it to deal: acid, cold, fire, force, lightning, necrotic, or thunder.

**Dueling.** On her turn, if Lya hit a creature with a melee weapon attack she gains a second reaction to use before the start of her next turn. In addition, if Lya hit two or more creatures with melee weapon attacks after her last turn ended, she can use a bonus action to Dodge.

**Ethereal Sight.** Lya can see 60 feet into the Ethereal Plane when she is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

**Improved Critical.** Lya's weapon attacks score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20.

**Incorporeal Movement.** Lya can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. She takes 5 (1d10) force damage if she ends her turn inside an object.

**Precise Strike (1/Turn).** Lya deals 7 (2d6) extra damage with a melee weapon attack.

**Reality Wound (Recharge 5–6).** Lya's attack seems to leave a gash in the world itself. When she makes an attack, whether or not she hits, Lya can create tongues of flame that take up a 5-foot square of her target's space. This apparent rip in space remains until the end of the encounter, and any creature that enters this area or ends its turn in the area takes 17 (5d6) fire damage.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Lya attacks four times with her *razorburst rapier*, twice with her withering touch, or twice with her *razorburst rapier* and once with her withering touch.

**Withering Touch.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 23 (4d8+5) necrotic damage.

**Razorburst Rapier.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (1d8+7) magical piercing damage and if the target has fewer than 5 hit points remaining, the weapon shrieks as mechanism of bladed teeth unfold from the hilt to saw back and forth. The target makes a Constitution saving throw (DC equal to the attack's damage). On a success, the target loses an extremity of its choice—hand, foot, arm, or leg. On a failure, the attacker chooses which extremity the target loses. Creatures without extremities are unaffected. A severed arm or hand prevents use of anything that the creature was holding or carrying. A severed foot slows the target's speed by 10 feet. A severed leg renders the target prone.

**Etherealness.** Lya enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. She is visible on the Material Plane while she is in the Border Ethereal, and vice versa, yet she can't affect or be affected by anything on the other plane.

**Telekinetic (Recharge 6).** Lya innately casts *telekinesis* (spell save DC 18, spell attack +10).

## REACTIONS

**Combat Parry.** Lya adds 5 to her AC against one melee attack that would hit her. To do so, Lya must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon. If the attack misses, the attacker provokes an opportunity attack from Lya.

**Infernal Wrath of the Jierre Bloodline (1/Day).** When Lya is hit by an attack, she can use her reaction to deal 17 (5d6) fire damage to the creature that attacked her. The creature must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or catch on fire, taking 17 (5d6) fire damage at the end of each of its turns until the flames are extinguished.

**Draconic Witchoil Golem**

Huge construct, unaligned

**Armor Class** 18 (natural armor)**Hit Points** 130 (20d12)**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
28 (+9)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)	1 (-5)	11 (+0)	1 (-5)

**Saving Throws** Dex +9, Con +5, Wis +5**Skills** Perception +10

Damage Vulnerabilities radiant

**Damage Resistances** necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons not made from adamantite

Damage Immunities poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 20

Languages —

**Challenge** 16 (15,000 XP)**Magical Attacks.** The golem's natural weapons count as adamantite and magical for the purpose of overcoming resistance and immunity to nonmagical attacks and damage**Magic Resistance.** The golem has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.**ACTIONS****Multiattack.** The golem attacks once with its slam, twice with its claws, and once with its tail.**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 23 (4d6+9) bludgeoning damage plus 21 (6d6) necrotic damage.**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (2d8+9) slashing damage.**Tail.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d6+9) bludgeoning damage.**Close-Quarters Rocketry (Recharge 5–6).** Vents along the golem's flanks erupt with flames in a 15-foot radius around it. Other creatures in the area must make a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw, taking 49 (14d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much on a success. In addition, the force of the blast grants the golem a fly speed of 50 feet, but it must land at the end of its movement or it falls.**Aftermath.**

A defeated Lya disincorporates, but will return to the ghost council in a few days. If the party sinks the flagship, the Danorans think better of tussling with She Who Writhes and retreat. Once the fey titan has done her fair share of damage, Beshela dives into the sea and tells her mistress that Risur's monarch has fled to the land. The kraken withdraws, but continues to terrorize the seas around Risur in the coming months.

The party has a chance to get close to Governor's Island and see the shield protecting the fort, which glows brighter as the lighthouse within activates. A sustained cannon barrage (or the *Coaltongue's* brand) can crack a hole in the wall, though the party will need to be prepared to move through quickly. They might bring some soldiers or other allies with them, but the shield recloses rapidly, and waiting for another barrage to create a new opening gives Stanfield time to activate the lighthouse, which will turn the entire city against the party.

**Stanfields' Stand****Social. Real-Time.**

*One of Governor Stanfield's incarnations converses with the party before they attack.*

The Governor's Island has an outer government district surrounded by a modest wall. Inside that, heavier walls defend the Governor's Island Fortress, and in its center is the 40-foot high keep surrounded by a 20-foot deep dry moat. Once the party finds a way to crack the shield protecting the fort and get inside, they find the fort's main doors open, the courtyard and interior buildings seemingly abandoned, except for the central keep.

A second, smaller dome covers the roof of the keep. Translucent, it reveals several pillar-like structures of some sort, emitting beams of differently-colored light that generally converge on a taller structure that resembles a lighthouse. Every few moments the beams angle away from the lighthouse, change colors, then swing back. Each time they do, another star falls out of the night sky.

Then a single figure approaches them from a nearby smithy. It's Roland Stanfield, but not the governor the party knows.

**Framing What Is to Come.**

This Stanfield has a normal skin tone, not the flat-colored eyes and lined skin of a deva. He wears plain grey clothes and a silver fishhook necklace, but there is a soft glow about him. If given the chance, he explains that he was the first Roland Stanfield, who fought in the Second Victory and witnessed Srasama's fall. Possessed of a bit more swagger and a bit less serene detachment than the current Stanfield, he describes himself as "the conscientious objector," the only one of Stanfield's past lives who objects to the Obscurati's plan.

Stanfield has manifested a dozen past lives into physical form, but he has allowed this incarnation to speak against him. This Stanfield entreats the party to stop his newer self. It was mortal hubris that led to the Great Malice, he says, and hubris will spell disaster for this great design as well.

Or, at least that what this incarnation claims. In truth, the Stanfields are united; this version is simply stalling and gathering information, since Stanfield is aware of everything his incarnations perceive. A DC 32 Wisdom (Insight) check is required to detect this ploy. Otherwise, the original Stanfield talks for a few minutes, offering three specific pieces of deceptive advice: (a) destroying the lighthouse will reverse the Obscurati's changes, (b) Stanfield is weakest if you destroy his other incarnations in order from earliest to most recent, and (c) Nicodemus himself will be arriving soon with the colossus to make Flint the capital of his new world.

This incarnation claims he is not permitted to harm his other incarnations, and that he has sworn off violence altogether. He'll accompany the party if they ask, but will wait to betray them until they reach the top of the tower. His stats are the same as a Holy Warrior Incarnation (page @@).

**Miscellanea.**

Stanfield needs time to complete his ritual and attune the whole of Risur to the planar traits of the Obscurati's new world order. Keep the timeline flexible, so that the party inevitably arrives with only about 10 minutes to spare. However, if they sit and wait and refuse



to press ahead, Stanfield will finish, causing everyone in the nation – except for a few high-level or strong-willed individuals – to hold off on fighting until they give talking a chance. The party will find themselves without allies and possibly bereft of some of their powers. See the sidebar New World Order.

If the party explores, they can find a few members of the maintenance staff in hiding. The defenders have moved into the keep. The keep has no windows, only scattered arrow slits, including three directly over the entrance door, through which light sneaks.

Parties who want to harken back to ZEITGEIST #1: *Island at the Axis of the World* can find the fort’s sewer system and try crawling up the drainage into the keep’s latrine, arriving in Area B.

## Lightning Strike Rescue Op

### Action. Tactical.

*The party tries to save the day, and discover Stover Delft has been replaced by a doppelganger.*

When Governor Stanfield ordered the island evacuated, he kept a contingent of soldiers and warned them that a group of RHC agents had become traitors. Stover Delft (rather, his doppelganger) corroborated this. The soldiers don’t initially trust the party, but if they’re convincing, if the Delft doppelganger is revealed as an imposter, or if they leave the soldiers alive long enough to hear Stanfield’s diatribe about Risur, they may turn to the party’s side.

Otherwise, this battle could be overwhelming.





### Keep Exterior.

The drawbridge over the moat is withdrawn up when the party arrives (AC 14, 100 hit points, DC 26 Strength check). Behind it a steel-reinforced set of wooden double doors (AC 16, 150 hit points, DC 26 Strength check) and a steel portcullis (AC 20, 50 hit points, Strength check 24, but only providing cover, since attacks can pass through it) block the entrance. The reinforced stone walls (AC 12, 500 hit points, Strength DC 30) only have three arrow slits, directly over the entry door, each lined with interior gold wire to prevent teleportation. However, if the party waits 5 minutes until Stanfield completes his ritual, the golden ward will no longer function due to altered planar physics.

Three levers inside the door at Area A lower the draw bridge, open the doors, and raise the portcullis.

A magical shield (AC 30, 200 hit points, regenerates 50 hit points at the end of each round) covers the roof and all parts of the building's exterior higher than 30 feet.

### Keep Interior.

Inside the keep, if the party used massive firepower to break the magical shield around the fortress, scatter thick chunks of squares with debris, creating difficult terrain. The ritual in Area H creates a pillar of lightning that rises through Area N up to the ceiling, brightly illuminating the building. It causes the internal rooms to cast sharp shadows. Any PC proficient with Arcana immediately realizes that the shield overhead is powered by that beam.

#### LAST LINE OF DEFENSE

- 1 conspirator incarnations
- 2 sorcerer incarnations
- 4 swordsman incarnations
- 6 Risuri elite squads
- 1 doppelganger agent (in the form of Stover Delft)
- 1 staircase mimic



## New World Order.

More detailed rules of the magical nature of the new world will be presented in ZEITGEIST #10: *Godmind*, but when the Obscurati ritual is complete, the following changes affect reality. This probably happens after the party thwarts Stanfield and a star strikes the keep, but it might happen earlier if they wait too long.

- The sky beckons. Gold no longer blocks teleportation. Flight magic can last more than 5 minutes.
- Reason trumps emotion. Everyone has advantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks if they use rational appeals rather than emotional ones. Everyone has disadvantage on Wisdom (Insight) and Charisma (Intimidation) checks.
- Death loses its sting. Everyone automatically stabilizes when unconscious and heals to 1 hit point after a minute. A critical hit needs to be delivered to a creature at 0 hit points to kill it. You have advantage on saving throws against disease and poison.
- Space yields to understanding. Every creature with Intelligence 3 or greater can teleport within line of sight as a bonus action, but only to places it has been since the nature of the world changed. This new ability is not apparent, and likely will only be discovered by chance, unless the party paid close attention to the Ob's plans in ZEITGEIST #7: *Schism*.
- Eladrin lose their racial ability to teleport via the Dreaming, but their attacks deal full damage against incorporeal creatures. They of course do gain the line-of-sight ability everyone has.
- Deva who die reincarnate one last time, but as a different race or creature, appropriate to how they lived their life. Stanfield, for instance, will reincarnate as a rakshasa due to his ongoing deception.
- The rules of magic change. No one can properly complete a magic spell until they learn the new planar physics. In the short term, no character can cast any spell.

Seven of Stanfield's incarnations wait here:

- One **swordsman**, leading the soldiers from just south of the barricade in Area A;
- One **conspirator** atop the roof at Area N, acting as a target;
- Two more **swordsmen** hiding south of the two central pillars, invisible (thanks to the magic of sorcerer incarnations) and ready to ambush PCs who blunder too close;
- A **swordsman** waiting in Room F;
- A **sorcerer** overseeing the ritual in Area H; and
- Another **sorcerer** providing defensive magic from atop Area K.

Three squads of marines (each consisting of a dozen men) defend the ground floor – one on the arrow slit overwatch in Area J, one behind the entrance barricade at Area A, and the other in room E. Another three squads provide fire from the roofs of the rooms – one each atop Areas K, L, and M. Additionally, the doppel-Delft commands from atop Area L.

Finally, the staircase at Area D is a giant mimic. It doesn't attack until someone steps on it.

## Risuri Elite Squad

Gargantuan swarm of Medium humanoids, lawful neutral

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 86 (9d8+36)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	17 (+3)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

**Saving Throws** Dex +6, Wis +5, Cha +3

**Skills** Athletics +8, Perception +8, Survival +8

**Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

**Senses** passive Perception 18

**Languages** Common, Primordial

**Challenge** 7 (2,900 XP)

**Chaos of Combat.** Any creature that is adjacent to or in the swarm's space has a hard time focusing on magic. A creature casting a spell or concentrating on a spell makes a Constitution saving throw (DC 15 + spell level) or loses the spell.

**Druidic Support.** The swarm contains druids able to command lightning. As a bonus action, the swarm can call down a lightning bolt on any point it can see within 100 feet. Creatures in a 5-foot radius of the bolt make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 17 (5d6) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much on a success.

**Swarm.** The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Medium creature. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

### ACTIONS

**Bayonet Flurry.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (4d6+5) piercing damage, or 12 (2d6+5) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.

**Fusillade.** The swarm fires a fusillade of bullets in four 200-foot lines that are 5 feet wide. Each creature in the line must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 25 (4d10+3) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

## Staircase Mimic

Gargantuan aberration, neutral

**Armor Class** 18 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 248 (16d20+80)

**Speed** 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
28 (+9)	12 (+1)	21 (+5)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)

**Saving Throws** Dex +6, Int +7, Wis +8, Cha +6

**Skills** Perception +13, Stealth +11, Survival +8

**Damage Immunities** acid

**Condition Immunities** prone

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 23

**Languages** Common, Primordial, Undercommon

**Challenge** 13 (10,000 XP)

**Adhesive (Object Form Only).** The mimic adheres to anything that touches it. A Huge or smaller creature adhered to the mimic is also grappled by it (escape DC 23), taking 7 (2d6) acid damage at the start of each of the mimic's turns. Ability checks made to escape this grapple have disadvantage.



**Amorphous.** The mimic can move through a space as narrow as 5 feet wide without squeezing.

**False Appearance (Object Form Only).** While the mimic remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary object.

**Grappler.** The mimic has advantage on attack rolls against any creature grappled by it.

**Shapechanger.** The mimic can use its action to polymorph into an object or back into its true, amorphous form. Its statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

#### ACTIONS

**Pseudopod.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 27 (4d8+9) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) acid damage.

If the mimic is in object form, the target is subjected to its Adhesive trait.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 27 (4d8+9) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) acid damage.

### Doppelganger Agent

Medium monstrosity (shapechanger), neutral

**Armor Class** 19 (+2 studded leather)

**Hit Points** 104 (16d8+32)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

**Saving Throws** Dex +10, Con +7, Wis +6

**Skills** Acrobatics +10, Arcana +6, Deception +12, Insight +11, Perception +6, Persuasion +12, Stealth +10

**Condition Immunities** charmed

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

**Languages** Common, Primordial

**Challenge** 13 (10,000 XP)

**Ambusher.** The doppelganger has advantage on attack rolls against any creature it has surprised.

**Evasion.** If the doppelganger is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, the doppelganger instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

**Innate Spellcasting.** The doppelganger's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma. It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

**3/day:** *mage hand*

**2/day:** *invisibility*

**Shapechanger.** The doppelganger can use its action to polymorph into a Small or Medium humanoid it has seen, or back into its true form. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

**Sneak Attack.** Once per turn, the doppelganger deals an extra 17 (5d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the doppelganger that isn't incapacitated and the doppelganger doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The doppelganger attacks twice with its slam or three times with its dagger of wounding.

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d6+6) bludgeoning damage.

**Dagger of Wounding.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d4+6) magical piercing damage. Hit points lost to this weapon's damage can be regained only through a short or long rest, rather than by regeneration, magic, or any other means.

Once per turn, when the doppelganger hits a creature with an attack using this magic weapon, it can wound the target. At the start of each of the wounded creature's turns, it takes 2 (1d4) necrotic damage for each time the doppelganger has wounded it, and it can then make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, ending the effect of all such wounds on itself on a success. Alternatively, the wounded creature, or a creature within 5 feet of it, can use an action to make a DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check, ending the effect of such wounds on it on a success.

**Read Thoughts.** The doppelganger magically reads the surface thoughts of one creature within 60 feet of it. The effect can penetrate barriers, but 3 feet of wood or dirt, 2 feet of stone, 2 inches of metal, or a thin sheet of lead blocks it. While the target is in range, the doppelganger can continue reading its thoughts, as long as the doppelganger's concentration isn't broken (as if concentrating on a spell). While reading the target's mind, the doppelganger has advantage on Wisdom (Insight) and Charisma (Deception, Intimidation, and Persuasion) checks against the target.

#### REACTIONS

**Uncanny Dodge.** When an attacker that the doppelganger can see hits it with an attack, it can use its reaction to halve the attack's damage against it.

### Stanfield Incarnations.

Stanfield has three varieties of incarnations in this encounter. All three share Stanfield's *old injury* weakness (see page @@ for more details).

#### Swordsman Incarnation

Medium humanoid (deva), lawful evil

**Armor Class** 19 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 85 (10d8+40)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	19 (+4)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

**Saving Throws** Dex +5, Int +5

**Skills** Deception +9, Intimidation +9, Perception +8

**Senses** passive Perception 18

**Languages** Common, Primordial

**Challenge** 9 (5,000 XP)

**Innate Spellcasting.** The incarnation's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence. It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

**1/day each:** *comprehend languages*, *spare the dying*

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The incarnation attacks five times.

**Ghostblade.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8+4) piercing damage.





### Conspirator Incarnation

Medium humanoid (deva), lawful evil

**Armor Class** 19 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 75 (10d8+30)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)

**Saving Throws** Con +7, Int +5, Cha +4

**Skills** Athletics +4, Deception +8, Insight +10, Intimidation +8, Perception +10, Stealth +12

**Senses** passive Perception 20

**Languages** Common, Primordial

**Challenge** 9 (5,000 XP)

**Bane Weapons.** The incarnation deals an extra 9 (2d8) damage with weapon attacks (included below).

**Innate Spellcasting.** The incarnation's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence. It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

**1/day each:** *comprehend languages, spare the dying*

**Spellcasting.** The incarnation is a 7th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). The incarnation has the following spells prepared:

**Cantrips (at will):** *acid splash, guidance, light*

**1st level (4 slots):** *alarm, bless, disguise self, divine favor*

**2nd level (3 slots):** *invisibility, knock, silence, spiritual weapon*

**3rd level (3 slots):** *blink, spirit guardians*

**4th level (1 slots):** *resilient sphere*

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The conspirator attacks three times.

**Dagger.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/40 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (1d4+2d8+4) piercing damage.

### Sorcerer Incarnation

Medium humanoid (deva), lawful evil

**Armor Class** 19 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 65 (10d8+20)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	8 (-1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	21 (+5)

**Saving Throws** Con +5, Cha +9

**Skills** Arcana +9, Deception +13, Perception +11

**Senses** passive Perception 21

**Languages** Common, Primordial

**Challenge** 9 (5,000 XP)

**Feat: War Magic.** The incarnation has advantage when it is concentrating on a spell and has to make a Constitution saving throw from taking damage, it can wield weapons or a shield in both hands and still make somatic components for spellcasting, and can use its reaction to cast a spell (maximum casting time: 1 action) at a creature that provokes an opportunity attack from it.

**Innate Spellcasting.** The incarnation's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence. It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

**1/day each:** *comprehend languages, spare the dying*

**Sorcery Points (10/Day).** As a bonus action on its turn, the incarnation can expend one spell slot and either gain a number of sorcery points equal to the slot's level or create a spell slot by expending sorcery points (1st-level—2 points, 2nd-level—3 points, 3rd-level—5 points, 4th-level—6 points, 5th-level—7 points).

• **Metamagic: Distant Spell.** When the incarnation casts a spell that has a range of 5 feet or greater, it can spend 1 sorcery point to double the range of the spell. When it casts a spell that has a range of touch, it can spend 1 sorcery point to make the range of the spell 30 feet.

• **Metamagic: Quicken Spell.** When the incarnation casts a spell that has a casting time of 1 action, it can spend 2 sorcery points to change the casting time to 1 bonus action for this casting.

• **Metamagic: Subtle Spell.** When the incarnation casts a spell, it can spend 1 sorcery point to cast it without any somatic or verbal components.

• **Metamagic: Twinned Spell.** When the incarnation casts a spell that targets only one creature and doesn't have a range of self, it can spend a number of sorcery points equal to the spell's level to target a second creature in range with the same spell (1 sorcery point if the spell is a cantrip). To be eligible for Twinned Spell, a spell must be incapable of targeting more than one creature at the spell's current level.

**Spellcasting.** The incarnation is a 10th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). The incarnation knows the following spells:

**Cantrips (at will):** *light, mage hand, message, prestidigitation, ray of frost, resistance*

**1st level (4 slots):** *floating disk, magic missile, shield, true strike*

**2nd level (3 slots):** *acid arrow, blur, invisibility, scorching ray, spider climb*

**3rd level (3 slots):** *fireball, protection from energy*

**4th level (3 slots):** *fire shield, freedom of movement, stone shape*

**5th level (2 slots):** *cone of cold*

#### ACTIONS

**Quarterstaff.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

*Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage, or 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage if wielded with two hands.

### Avoiding a TPK.

If the party is looking bad and there are still plenty of enemies, feel free to have reinforcements arrive. Gale might have conjured a mighty lightning bolt to crack the shield, allowing her and Asrabey to come through, or Lauryn Cyneburg might have figured out the arcane resonance of the shield and managed to teleport through with a few allies. If this happens, though, try to tie it into the party's own actions, or what they ordered their allies to handle.



## Terrain.

The interior of the keep has a 40-foot ceiling, with a lot of open space. Several single story buildings fill the room, and a grand staircase (actually a mimic) spirals up to the roof (it ate the original staircase, and now access is only via magic).

- **A. Entrance Barricade.** Various furniture bits form 5-foot high walls (Strength DC 18).
- **B. Toilets.** Finely-appointed bathrooms for men and women.
- **C. Offices.** The soldiers have been using these rooms as uncomfortable barracks for the past day. A ladder in the southwest hall leads to the roof of these buildings.
- **D. Grand Staircase.** Actually a mimic.
- **E. Conference Room.** Plenty of tables for partial cover. A staircase leads to the roof of this building.
- **F. Quartermaster Office.** A staircase leads to the roof.
- **G. Supplies.** There's enough here to survive several weeks of siege.
- **H. Banquet Hall.** This room has been adapted into a ritual chamber. The door is inscribed with a nonsense phrase that hides a *symbol* of pain (DC 13 Constitution saving throw negates).

Inside, the real Stover Delft has been placed on the central table, while the other four tables have ritual components. Since Delft – as a high-ranking agent of the king – is imbued with some power of Risur's Rites of Rulership, the ritual is perpetually draining his life force to power the shields around the fortress and over the top of the keep. Lightning streams from his chest through the ceiling and up into an arcane capacitor on the roof.

Ending the ritual safely requires four characters to simultaneously disassemble the ritual components. Each table requires a different DC 22 check – Intelligence (Arcana), Wisdom (Medicine), Intelligence (Nature), and Intelligence (Religion). Failing even a single check causes Delft's heart to stop, and the ritual to go out of control, dealing 28 (8d6) lightning damage in a 15-foot radius (DC 22 Dexterity saving throw halves this damage).

On success or failure, the shields over the keep and the fortress vanish (at this point, if the party had allies on the ready just outside the fort they can rush inside. Otherwise, even if the party takes a brief rest, it takes more than 5 minutes for reinforcements to get onto the island and into the keep.)

- **I. Kitchen.** Stanfield has used this as a makeshift prison. If the party has any associates whom the GM would like to keep as hostages, they're here.
- **J. Arrow Slit Overwatch.** One of the squads attacks from here as the party approaches, though they can only target a single foe with Fusillade when firing through the arrow slits.
- **K. Rooftops.** Each rooftop has a 5-foot high stone wall to provide cover. Planks placed between the buildings act as bridges, but could be kicked away to stymie enemies.
- **L. More Rooftops.** As above.
- **M. Even More Rooftops.**
- **N. Over the Ritual.** The beam of lightning that crackles into the ceiling is blindingly bright, and attacks against creatures

within 10 feet of the glowing area take a -2 penalty. A creature that enters or ends its turn in the area of the lightning takes 28 (8d6) lightning damage.

## Deconstruction.

In the midst of the battle, while the fake Delft is shouting orders and the soldiers are shooting the party, the various Stanfield incarnations have a speech prepared, which they read in the same calm, judgmental tone regardless of how much peril they are in. Every incarnation talks at the same time (except conspirator incarnations who are trying to hide). Each incarnation glows slightly, making it clear that they aren't the real Stanfield.

Each paragraph takes about a round for him to say.

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"I know you've recently dealt with Catherine Romana and Lya Jierre, so you might be tired of speeches, but we intelligentsia like to explain ourselves. Constables, I hope you've considered whether the cause you fight for is worthy.

"Consider Risur. It has been at near-constant war for the past five hundred years. It has been justified as self-defense, but except from this latest conflict we were always the superior force. Ber's armies were savage and untrained. Danor lacked magic. In Elfaivar we removed unwanted survivors to claim our colonies.

"Here in Flint, among the government who else but I expressed concern for the plight of the workers? People died to protest the injustice they suffered, but did the king ever speak out in their favor? No, he remained silent so that the industry necessary for his war machines would flourish.

"So then we come to you, brave constables. How wonderfully strong you are. By our last census, about fifty thousand people work in the factories of Parity Lake. Their per capita annual income is about 700 silver. Right now you're casually wearing enchanted items that cost more than the entire district earns in a year. Of course, that's ignoring the fabulous prosperity of the owners.

"You were present during Aodhan's announcement that he intended to seek peace with Danor, a speech given from the deck of the most powerful weapon in the world. The hypocrisy was astounding, but what unsettled me most was that he seemed blind to it.

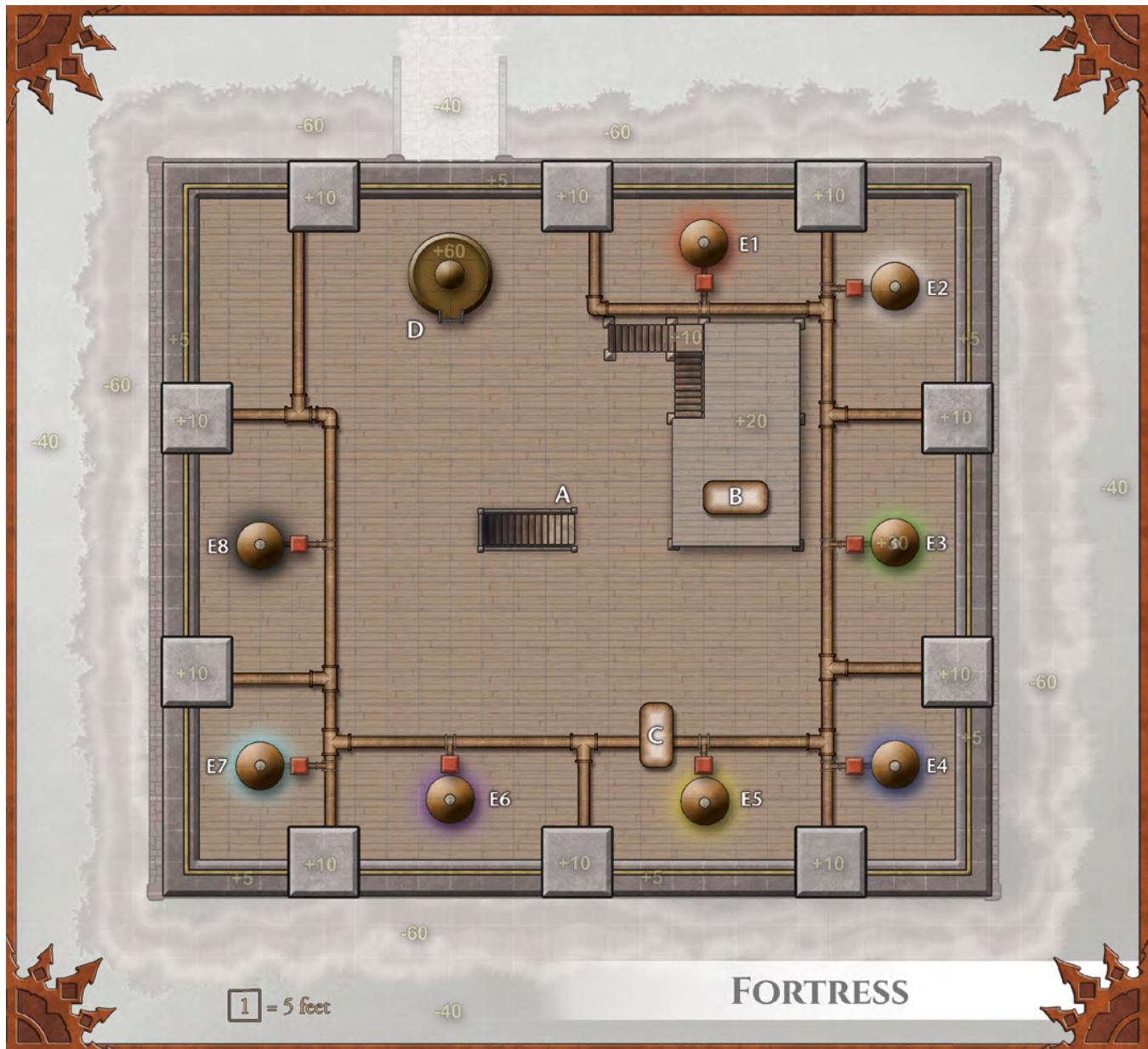
"This nation is a source of greater misery than any other in five centuries, and you are the hand that wields the scourge. Set it down, constables, before the world changes and discovers what villains you truly are."

---

During his speech, the Risuri soldiers don't seem to get it at first, but by his third round some of them stop fighting. In the fourth round they all stop, realizing they're not serving the loyal servant of the king they thought the governor was. They look to the party for guidance.

## Aftermath.

Once the party has secured the room (and killed the staircase), they have a chance to rest and figure out how to reach the roof. Simple options include teleportation, levitation, flight, or using the monarch's ability to just extrude a new staircase of rough rock from the earth itself.



## Phenomenal Cosmic Power

### Action. Tactical.

Stanfield operates an eldritch machine, trying to sway Risur to the Ob's control before the party can stop him.

The fall of the shield panics Stanfield, and he shifts his plans from finishing the ritual to preparing to kill the party. If they destroy the lighthouse, all his work will be for naught. He takes cover east of the control panel on the raised platform (Area B), while his four last incarnations wait beside the Area D lighthouse (holy warrior), the E7 lantern (loremaster), the Area C capacitor (politician), and the E4 lantern (technologist).

Stanfield doesn't have another speech prepared. Honestly he thought he would have killed them by now. As the battle progresses and his incarnations are destroyed, his serene façade cracks, red seams of light flicker across the lines that trace his body, and he starts to lose his temper.

### THE ELDRITCH MACHINE

- Roland Stanfield
- 1 holy warrior incarnation
- 1 loremaster incarnation
- 1 politician incarnation
- 1 technologist incarnation

### Terrain.

The top of the tower is lined with 5-foot high walls, with occasional 10-foot high adornments. Between these, eight brass lanterns glow different colors, fed a stream of gas that is refined by the red devices adjacent to them. The lanterns emit beams, which start the encounter all aimed directly at the central lighthouse.

A pipeline runs 3 feet off the ground at that awkward “do I climb over it or crawl under it” height. The raised platform has control switches to turn lanterns on and off, but Stanfield can manipulate them telekinetically. He can also telekinetically change the aim of



the lanterns.

By the time the party arrives, the capacitor that received energy that was drawn from Delft is drained and no longer creates the forcefield.

- **A. Staircase Entrance.** To Stanfield's dismay, there's no trap door to cover the stairs.
- **B. Control Platform.** The panel has a lever for each of the lanterns, allowing them to be turned on or off as a minor action. You have to squeeze the handle to move the lever, so it's not possible to just shove multiple at once.
- **C. Capacitor.** It feeds energy to the lanterns, and still has sufficient storage for the ritual. It just can't create a forcefield any longer. If damaged (AC 11, 40 hit points), it struggles to provide sufficient power. Each round at initiative count 0, roll 1d8 to determine one lantern that doesn't work for that round.
- **D. Wayfarer's Lighthouse.** Designed to help transition Flint, and by proxy the entirety of Risur, easily into the new metaphysical reality the Ob have created, this lighthouse is enchanted to resist attacks. As long as it is being fed energy from at least one lantern it is invulnerable.
- **E. Lanterns.** Each channels a different plane of energy. The complicated part of the process that slowly replaced one plane with another is over. Now each represents one of the new worlds the Ob is linking reality to. Each lantern has AC 15 and 100 hit points. A creature adjacent to the lantern can spend a standard action to re-aim its beam, using a pair of crank wheels.
  - 1. **Jiese, the Plane of Fire.** Aspect of inspiration.
  - 2. **Perlocus, the Plane of Air.** Aspect of speech.
  - 3. **Mojang, the Plane of Life.** Aspects of artifice and craft.
  - 4. **Ostea, the Plane of Water.** Aspect of healing.
  - 5. **Ratios, the Plane of Earth.** Aspect of logic.
  - 6. **Fourmyle, the Plane of Space.** Aspect of empowerment.
  - 7. **Illocus, the Plane of Time.** Aspect of expression.
  - 8. **Av, the Plane of Death.** Aspects of dreams and mirrors.

### Roland Stanfield

Medium humanoid (deva), lawful evil

**Armor Class** 20 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 153 (18d8+72)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	8 (-1)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	23 (+6)

**Saving Throws** Con +10, Dex +5, Wis +9

**Skills** Arcana +13, Deception +18, History +7, Insight +15, Perception +9, Persuasion +15

**Senses** passive Perception 25

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Dwarvish, Elvish, Primordial

**Challenge** 17 (18,000 XP)

**Feat: War Magic.** Roland has advantage when he is concentrating on a spell and has to make a Constitution saving throw from taking damage, he can wield weapons or a shield in both hands and still make somatic components for spellcasting, and can use his reaction to cast a spell (maximum casting time: 1 action) at a creature that provokes an opportunity attack from it.

**Innate Spellcasting.** Roland's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence. He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

**1/day each:** comprehend languages, spare the dying

**Living Memories.** Stanfield is linked to his previous incarnations. Each incarnation physically resembles Stanfield, but is slightly translucent and wields equipment appropriate to its talents.

Stanfield acts at Initiative count 30, and the four incarnations in this encounter act at 25, 20, 15, and 10 (if the incarnation of Stanfield's first life is also present, it acts on initiative count 5.) Each of them takes a full turn at that initiative count, and in most ways they act like independent creatures with their own abilities detailed below. Whenever the real Governor Stanfield would take damage or be affected by a condition, he can choose to have his nearest active incarnation suffer that damage or condition instead. Physical objects (like entangling vines) can still impede Stanfield's movement, but he can shunt supernatural effects to his other lives.

Whenever one of Stanfield's incarnations is destroyed, the glowing lines on the real Stanfield's skin dim, and he coughs up a bit of blood. If the central lantern is destroyed, the magic letting him manifest all his incarnations ends; all the remaining incarnations fade away, and he collapses but survives (helpless) long enough to have a final word.

**Old Injury.** Stanfield has an old wound on his back that has persisted throughout his myriad lives. Whenever Stanfield or one of his incarnations is knocked prone, he takes 4 (1d8) piercing damage.

**Planar Beam (Ex)** As a bonus action, Stanfield or one of his incarnations chooses a lantern he can see, aiming its beam to fill a 5-foot radius area anywhere within 500 feet. Until the lantern is re-aimed or destroyed, creatures suffer an effect appropriate to the plane of the chosen lantern as long as they remain within the area of the burst.

• **Jiese.** The creature takes 17 (5d6) fire damage if it enters or starts its turn in the area.

• **Perlocus.** The creature cannot take hostile actions against Stanfield or his allies.

• **Mojang.** Objects in the area are repaired 50 points of damage at the initiative count 0. Destroyed objects cannot be repaired.

• **Ostea.** The creature is covered in blood and takes 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. Whenever the target takes damage this way, the real Stanfield regains that many hit points.

• **Ratios.** The creature is restrained and cannot move from its space.

• **Fourmyle.** The creature can spend 5 feet of movement to teleport to any other zone created by a lantern.

• **Illocus.** As long as the creature is in the area, note the types and amounts of damage it takes. At the start of its turn, it takes damage equal to the damage it has taken since the start of its last turn. This damage is cumulative if the target remains in the area.

• **Av.** Objects in the area take 50 damage at initiative count 0 (ground becomes difficult terrain), as parts of the terrain spiral away, like dust caught in a whirlwind.

**Spellcasting.** Roland is an 18th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 20, +12 to hit with spell attacks). He knows the following spells:

**Cantrips (at will):** *chill touch, guidance, light, mending, sacred flame*  
**1st level (4 slots):** *command, cure wounds, sanctuary, shield of faith*  
**2nd level (3 slots):** *augury, calm emotions, detect thoughts, enthrall, spiritual weapon*



**3rd level (3 slots):** *bestow curse, protection from energy, spiritual guardians*

**4th level (3 slots):** *death ward, divination, freedom of movement*

**5th level (3 slots):** *commune, hold monster, scrying*

**6th level (3 slots):** *blade barrier, forbiddance, heal*

**7th level (1 slot):** *etherealness, reverse gravity*

**8th level (1 slot):** *mind blank, power word stun*

**9th level (1 slot):** *storm of vengeance*

**ACTIONS**

**Dagger.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/40 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) piercing damage.

**Incarnations.**

Stanfield has four other incarnations present in this battle.

**Loremaster Incarnation**

Medium humanoid (deva), lawful evil

**Armor Class** 19 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 91 (14d8+28)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)	21 (+5)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

**Saving Throws** Con +6, Wis +8, Cha +7

**Skills** Arcana +15, Deception +12, History +10, Perception +13

**Senses** passive Perception 23

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Dwarvish, Elvish, Primordial

**Challenge** 13 (10,000 XP)

**Feat: War Magic.** The incarnation has advantage when it is concentrating on a spell and has to make a Constitution saving throw from taking damage, it can wield weapons or a shield in both hands and still make somatic components for spellcasting, and can use its reaction to cast a spell (maximum casting time: 1 action) at a creature that provokes an opportunity attack from it.

**Loremaster.** The incarnation has advantage on Intelligence checks and when making an Intelligence check that could benefit from having proficiency, it is considered proficient (+5 proficiency bonus).

**Innate Spellcasting.** The incarnation's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence. It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

**1/day each:** *comprehend languages, spare the dying*

**Spellcasting.** The incarnation is a 14th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). The incarnation has the following spells prepared:

**Cantrips (at will):** *mending, message, ray of frost, true strike*

**1st level (4 slots):** *faerie fire, grease, magic missile, shield*

**2nd level (3 slots):** *blur, enhance ability, scorching ray, see invisibility*

**3rd level (3 slots):** *blink, clairvoyance, dispel magic, fireball, lightning bolt, stinking cloud*

**4th level (3 slots):** *greater invisibility, ice storm*

**5th level (2 slots):** *cone of cold, telepathic bond, wall of force*

**6th level (1 slot):** *disintegrate, true seeing*

**7th level (1 slot):** *prismatic spray*

**ACTIONS**

**Quarterstaff.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage, or 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage if wielded with two hands.

**Holy Warrior Incarnation**

Medium humanoid (deva), lawful evil

**Armor Class** 21 (natural armor, shield)

**Hit Points** 119 (14d8+56)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	8 (-1)	19 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

**Saving Throws** Dex +4, Con +9, Wis +8

**Skills** Deception +12, Intimidation +12, Perception +13, Religion +10

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 23

**Languages** Primordial

**Challenge** 13 (10,000 XP)

**Feat: War Magic.** The incarnation has advantage when it is concentrating on a spell and has to make a Constitution saving throw from taking damage, it can wield weapons or a shield in both hands and still make somatic components for spellcasting, and can use its reaction to cast a spell (maximum casting time: 1 action) at a creature that provokes an opportunity attack from it.

**Innate Spellcasting.** The incarnation's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence. It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

**1/day each:** *comprehend languages, spare the dying*

**Spellcasting.** The incarnation is a 9th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). The incarnation has the following spells prepared:

**Cantrips (at will):** *chill touch, guidance, resistance, spare the dying*

**1st level (4 slots):** *bles, detect magic, divine favor, guiding bolt, shield of faith*

**2nd level (3 slots):** *enhance ability, hold person*

**3rd level (3 slots):** *dispel magic*

**4th level (3 slots):** *blight, stone shape*

**5th level (1 slot):** *contagion*

**ACTIONS**

**Multiattack.** The incarnation attacks four times or it attacks twice and casts one spell.

**Longsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

*Hit:* 7 (1d8+4) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10+3) slashing damage if wielded with two hands.

**Politician Incarnation**

Medium humanoid (deva), lawful evil

**Armor Class** 19 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 105 (14d8+42)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)

**Saving Throws** Dex +10, Wis +5, Cha +8

**Skills** Acrobatics +10, Deception +13, Insight +10, Intimidation +13, Perception +10, Sleight of Hand +15, Stealth +15

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 20

**Languages** Common, Primordial

**Challenge** 13 (10,000 XP)

**Cunning Action (1/Turn).** The incarnation can take a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, Hide, Use Object action, to make a Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check, or to use thieves' tools to disarm a trap or open a lock.



**Evasion.** If the incarnation is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, the incarnation instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

**Innate Spellcasting.** The incarnation's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence. It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

1/day each: comprehend languages, spare the dying

**Sneak Attack (1/Turn).** The incarnation deals an extra 24 (7d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the incarnation's that isn't incapacitated and the incarnation doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The incarnation attacks six times.

**Dagger of Venom.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d4+6) magical piercing damage.

**Envenom Dagger (1/Day).** The incarnation causes poison to coat the blade. The poison remains for 1 minute or until an attack using this weapon hits a creature. That creature must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 11 (2d10) poison damage and become poisoned for 1 minute.

#### REACTIONS

**Uncanny Dodge.** When an attacker that the incarnation can see hits it with an attack, it can use its reaction to halve the attack's damage against it.

### Technologist Incarnation

Medium humanoid (deva), lawful evil

**Armor Class** 19 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 105 (14d8+42)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

**Saving Throws** Dex +8, Int +8, Wis +7

**Skills** Arcana +13, Deception +10, Perception +12, Sleight of Hand +13

**Senses** passive Perception 22

**Languages** Common, Dwarvish, Primordial

**Challenge** 13 (10,000 XP)

**Innate Spellcasting.** The incarnation's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence. It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

1/day each: comprehend languages, spare the dying

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The incarnation attacks twice.

**Stormburst Rifle.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, range 150/300 ft., one target. *Hit:* 27 (7d6+3) lightning damage. Alternatively, the incarnation can fire in a 15-foot cone, dealing 24 (7d6) thunder damage to all creatures in the area that fail a DC 16 Strength saving throw. Creatures that fail the save are also pushed back 15 feet. Switching modes with the stormburst rifle is a bonus action.

**Subrail Strike (1/Day).** The incarnation activates a small contraption that quickly grows and disgorges a full-sized locomotive engine made of force. The engine is 10 feet wide and 30 feet long, and it moves

50 feet in a straight line before vanishing. It passes through physical obstructions harmlessly, but all creatures in its path must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw. A creature that fails its save takes 35 (10d6) force damage, is pushed back 5 feet out of the train's path, and knocked prone. A creature that succeeds on the saving throw takes half damage

### Tactics.

The real Stanfield tries to keep the high ground, raining down high level magic on whoever seems most resilient among the party. The rest of his incarnations then ignore that constable. The loremaster incarnation then lights up a target with upcasted *scorching ray*, which the holy warrior incarnation attacks. The politician incarnation will try to flank and backstab that target. The technologist incarnation is an opportunist, but prefers to target enemies who try to keep their distance.

Every Stanfield will, on its round, spend a bonus action to telekinetically adjust the beam of one of the lanterns, usually to catch a PC in something dangerous, but if necessary they'll aim a beam back at the lighthouse, use *Mojang* to repair a damaged lantern, or use *Fourmyle* for coordinated tactical maneuvering. If possible, they'll combo *Jiese* and *Ratios* on the same area, to burn a trapped creature slowly to death unless an ally can free them without also entering.

They make sure to always keep at least three beams pointed at the lighthouse, because if the lighthouse ever has no lanterns illuminating it, Stanfield will lose all his powers and his incarnations will all vanish.

Remember, a PC can re-aim a lantern as an action if they're adjacent to it. Effects like *mage hand* might also work, but it still takes an action to control the lantern.

### Aftermath.

When Stanfield is finally cut down, or when the lighthouse is snuffed, he coughs and clutches his back as he collapses. Blood pools around him, and his skin drains of color, but he looks skyward as his eyes darken with death.

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"You might have saved Risur," he says, "but Nicodemus will complete the ritual on Axis Island. It was a grand folly. Not my folly, though. Yours. Death has not stopped me before, and I swear even if the whole nation resists, it will not stop me now."

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He smiles and releases a dying breath. Everything is growing steadily brighter, lit from above, as a falling star approaches. One round later the roof of the keep is struck by the falling star. Any skyseer present knows this star's name: Mishados, named after an incarnation of Srasama, said to be a healer. Every creature in the lighthouse takes 100 damage (DC 28 Dexterity saving throw halves this damage). This damage cannot reduce a character below 1 hit point. The impact levels the building and leaves the party scattered in the debris, but miraculously doesn't kill anyone — except Stanfield.

Depending on the players' mood at this point, the GM can just keep this as a straight victory. Or if the party are riding high and aren't particularly injured, a GM can throw in the twist. As the





adventurers pull themselves from the rubble, they discover that their magic barely works. Then rocks fall aside as Stanfield rises up, reborn as a rakshasa (this “curse” was teased in the eladrin temple in ZEITGEIST #8: *Diaspora*).

Rakshasa Stanfield’s eyes glow red, and he stalks after the party, intending to cut them down one by one. Use the stats of a Holy Warrior incarnation, except that he fights with claws, not swords, and no attack can harm him unless it comes from one of the dagger-like shards of the fallen star (the magic item *arsenal of Dhebisu* works as well). A single strike from such a weapon destroys Stanfield utterly, leaving a smoking crater and a clattering, bleached skeleton.

## Brave New World

When the dust clears, the sky overhead is no longer dotted with a field of stars, but instead glows with the uneven haze of a charcoal nebula. A mere handful of stars wander the night, and skyseers recognize their energy as matching the lanterns of the lighthouse.

Magic above cantrips and orisons doesn’t work, though the mana is still there, just not moving as it once did. Already the PCs can feel something nudging them to behave differently, but they can easily shake it off. Others aren’t so adept, and the party quickly discovers citizens of Risur readily trust and listen to strangers.

A bright golden glow rises in the air on the western horizon, then fades a few minutes later. It isn’t until more than an hour later that the entire world rumbles with a deafening sound like an explosion, sweeping in from the same direction. A quick calculation of the speed of sound supports any guesses that the explosion occurred on Axis Island.

Any surviving Danoran ships flee, many of them pulled into the deep by She Who Writhes before the kraken withdraws to the wider sea. Atop Cauldron Hill stormclouds gather, but instead of falling rain, the mountain itself starts to erode and float upward, mote by mote. Flint holds its breath, wondering what the new day will bring. But hours pass, and when the sun should rise, instead the world is greeted only by a patch of the cloudy sky somewhat less dark. The haze there seems to churn ever so slowly, like two gears – immeasurably titanic to be visible at this cosmic distance – grinding between their teeth the heavens themselves.

The new age has dawned.

## Onward to Act Three

In ZEITGEIST #10: *Godmind*, the party has to subdue four fey titans before they can safely leave Risur. The new world order turns Asrabej Varal into an enemy of Risur, and he betrays them while trying to commune with She Who Writhes. Benedict Pemberton has captured Axis Island and has critical intelligence, but is blocked by the Danorans. If the party saves him, he can retrofit the party’s ship to be able to fly. The priority then becomes disrupting a gathering in Danor’s capital of heads of state and the world’s brightest minds, whom Nicodemus intends to turn hostile to Risur. A Gidim expedition force takes advantage of new psychic energy in the world to drive the gathered thinkers mad and create a monstrous psychic gestalt bent on consuming all it deems unworthy.

In ZEITGEIST #11: *Gorged on Ruins*, while the world slips into decay around them, the party seeks knowledge and magic to let them undo the Obscurati’s ritual. Help can be gained by dealing with each of three threats – a Gidim invasion of Ber, a wintry undead army in Drakr, and the execution of gods in Crisillyir awakening ancient evil trapped in the volcano that overlooks Alais Primos. Once they’re ready, the party can fly from this world to The Gyre, a celestial phenomenon that devours dying worlds.

In ZEITGEIST #12: *The Grinding Gears of Heaven*, the path to the gyre takes them to Av, the plane of dreams that is slowly dying and drawing the whole world toward annihilation. After saving as many of the fey as they can, the party has to explore the motes of ruined worlds around the Gyre. Undoing the Ob’s ritual requires finding new worlds to bind reality to, and each world possesses its own dangers and unique magical traits. Combining the right mix of planes could stabilize the world and save it from a final death, but the Voice of Rot wants to achieve apotheosis by causing the world’s end. The party must confront the fey titan at the center of the gyre where dead allies, enemies, and legendary figures join the battle for the fate of the world.

Finally in ZEITGEIST #13: *Avatar of Revolution*, the party returns to their homeworld and must rally the people of every nation. Their faith and fervor fuel a ritual to give the PCs the strength to defeat the colossus, which the Obscurati have restored. The party battles Nicodemus and the ghost council on Axis Island, all of them imbued with godlike power. Nicodemus would rather see the world enslaved than reject his grand design, but if he is vanquished, the party’s hands will guide the course of civilization’s next age. 🐉